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A PEEP

AT THE

THEATRES!

1114

AND

BIRD'S-EYE VIEWS OF MEN

IN

THE JUBILEE YEAR!

A NOVEL,

Satirical, Critical, and Moral,

IN THREE VOLUMES;

BY AN OLD NAVAL OFFICER.

VOL. III.

"He who runs may read!"

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THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL.

111.

TO

THE GALLANT AND PATRIOT PRINCE,

HISS ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE DUKE OF KENT;

WHO, UNLIKE THE TYRANT OF

THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT,

WHOSE AXIOM WITH HIS ARMIES, IS

"THE MORE IGNORANT THE MORE SERVILE,"

HAS NOBLY ESTABLISHED A SCHOOL

IN EVERY COMPANY OF HIS REGIMENT;

THAT THE BRAVE SOLDIERS OF BRITAIN,

ENABLED TO PERUSE THE BRILLIANT RECORDS

OF THE CONDUCT OF THEIR ANCESTORS,

MAY BEST LEARN HOW TO REGULATE THEIR OWN!

THIS THIRD VOLUME

IS MOST HUMBLY DEDICATED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

1114

A PEEP

AT THE

THEATRES.

VOL. III.

CHAPTER I.

MANY AN EXCELLENT DINNER HAS BEEN SPOILED BY THE ABRUPT INTRUSION OF AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

AFTER frequently expatiating on the levity of the tribe of itinerant players, who, though absolutely in want, would not be deprived of their jibes and their jeers; nor think of curtailing their own

indiscretions: also, on the infinite importance of such amiable and revered characters as Sally's excellent *Curate*, when stationed among the uncultivated inhabitants of rude and populous villages; having enjoyed a pleasant journey, our amiable *inseparables* arrived at St. Alban's, much renovated in health, refreshed in spirits, and reinstated in those essentially-deemed acquirements—the charms of their persons. They found the Earl of Hankering, and Sir William Vacant, arrived just before them; who were received, by his lordship with the sincerest pleasure; and the baronet with an interesting attention, not less gratifying to him, than surprising to the earl.

After taking a short walk, while dinner was preparing, the party had returned, and were conducted into an elegant room up stairs. Soon, however, an awkward

circumstance was on the point of occuring, which, most probably, would, in a minute, have undone all those little pleasing labours which Nature had been exerting herself in effecting—during the period of a whole month.

The cloth was laid, and the party was in momentary expectation of seeing the dinner make its welcome appearance, when they, certainly, heard a noise upon the stairs, though they, none of them, paid any attention to it; happening, at the moment, to be looking through the window into the garden, and talking about Bank-Top.

It had so fallen out, that some drovers, driving cattle through the town for the Monday's market at Smithfield, were beating one of their beasts very severely, for being refractory, on which the poor

animal broke from the drove—tossed one of the wretches, and, running up the inn-yard, mounted the open staircase, to the no small astonishment of all who saw him. Not inclined to confine himself to the landing-place at the head of the stairs, the beast had actually assumed a position for forcing the door of the room in which our party was; when the chamber-maid, running out of an adjoining room, drew his attention to her, at whom he instantly made a run; but, missing her, burst open the door of an apartment, in which were two gentlemen, just seated at table to their dinner, while their horses were changing. Fortunately for the gentlemen, they effected their escape unhurt; but, the table being overturned, the fish was spoiled by the fall; and the beast, by treading on the roasted fowl, had rendered that equally unserviceable. With the assistance of some butchers, the drovers

soon got the poor animal safe down stairs; and tranquillity was resuming her seat, when the sight of an elegant dinner passing by the two gentlemen, not only reminded them of their recent loss, but absolutely communicated an increase of appetite! Nothing else was ready at that instant; and they could not wait while another dinner was dressing.

"Who is that dinner going to, waiter?" said one of the gentlemen.

"I don't know the names, your honour, "but I believe they are noblemen," answered the waiter.

"Well! Tell them our situation; and "say, that the Marquis of Montresor, "and Sir George Osborne, will feel them- "selves highly obliged, to be suffered to "partake of their dinner."

The circumstance, and message, were duly reported by the waiter.

"I am sure I have heard of the mar-
"quis's name before," said Lady Harriett
—"but I do not immediately recollect
"where. Suppose we admit the gentle-
"tlemen?"

"Heavens!" said Eliza, "it is the same
"young nobleman who wounded Sir Yep
"Flankem, in consequence of his conduct
"at the masquerade!"

"So it is, I protest! By all means!
"Say we shall be happy to see the gentle-
"men."

On the gentlemen entering the room, Eliza softly exclaimed—"Heavens! Our "preservers!"

"Amazing!" cried Sir George—"This "is not less agreeable than surprising! "To meet our amiable theatrical friends, "where we least expected to find them, is "a pleasure not easily described!" In fact, the two gentlemen were the identical *Cato* and *Juba!*

The Earl of Hankering, and Sir William Vacant, who were attending to the Bank-Top story, while the beast was destroying the dinner of the ladies preservers, made the best acknowledgements for their invaluable aid to the ladies, at so critical a juncture.—Lady Harriett repeated her thanks; and Eliza, feeling the back of her hand tingle, where a *certain drop* had there fallen on it, *blushed hers*. A sufficiency of compliments having passed; and the dinner cooling; the party sat down to the table.

Lady Harriett was in high spirits—she ate heartily, and talked freely. The earl ate heartily too, as usual: so did Sir William and Sir George:—but Eliza's mind was too much confused to yield to so gross an appetite; and the marquis was too intensely occupied in watching her every motion, to think of what was on the table.

The cloth was no sooner drawn, than Sir George's servant announced the carriage to be at the door. The marquis looked as if the intelligence by no means pleased him. And Eliza would, at that instant, have given an empire—not to have looked at all.

"Poh! This is barbarous in the ex-
"treme!" cried Sir George—"to tear us
"from such company, and before we have
"had time to inquire after their health—

" which will ever be essential to our hap-
" piness! But a friend, not seen for several
" years, is, probably, waiting for us at
" this instant; therefore, I hope our
" abrupt departure will not be deemed
" wholly destitute of apology: and, as the
" winter theatres are now opened, I will
" venture to hope, that we shall soon en-
" joy the felicity of meeting our noble and
" amiable friends as usual."—They then
withdrew.

" Upon my word!" said the earl, as
soon as the two gentlemen had retired—
" the marquis was so much occupied in
" gazing on Miss O'Mara, that, were he
" not a marquis"—

Eliza blushed—then turned pale.

Lady Harriett saw that his lordship had
touched a most sensible *chord;* and feel-

ing highly pleased at the perfect recovery the baronet, was the more concerned for the delicate situation of her lovely friend. Therefore, to give the subject a turn, she said—" I am afraid the account of that " nasty bullock, with the consciousness of " our imminent danger, has affected you " my dear Eliza; and the abrupt appear- " ance of our recent preservers, must have " tended, still more, to agitate you. I " wish we were all well in town, my lord. " A night's repose might recover our " spirits."

As the Earl and Sir William had come down in a post-chaise, that they might have the pleasure of travelling back together, his lordship readily ordered the carriage. In fact, he had conceived strange ideas. He had heard that the Marquis of Montresor, when of age, would come to immense estates; therefore, could

hardly imagine that he would think of marrying a person so little known as Eliza; and of so little fortune, too; yet, he had seen the *young man* gaze on her most intensely: and as he was convinced that the *looks* were not like those of a libertine, there was no calculating what love, and a beautiful woman, *might* allure him to; consequently, his lordship judged it prudent to prepare for all events; and, during the little journey to town, behaved to the confused fair one with a degree of tender attention, not less soothing to Eliza, than pleasing to Lady Harriett—and surprising to Sir William: who, strange to tell, was not once absent, in conversation, during the whole ride to town!

The road was good, and all parties being anxious to get home, the *boys* rattled them through the two stages in a very

short time. Coffee was introduced soon after their arrival: which, by the avidity with which it was enjoyed, seemed to be a grateful repast to all: though far from being attended with the usual portion of conversation generally attached to it. Lady Harriett then apologizing for the apparent fatigue of Eliza, the gentlemen withdrew, promising to call on the morrow; and, if they found the ladies tolerably recovered, they would, on the Monday morning, take places for the *West Indian*; to be performed on that evening.

CHAPTER II.

HAPPY IS THE LADY WHO FINDS HER HEART IN SUCH A STATE AS TO SUFFER HER TO WITHDRAW HER TENDER ESTEEM FROM ONE GENTLEMAN, AND TRANSFER IT TO ANOTHER; AT THAT CRITICAL JUNCTURE, TOO, WHEN IT IS BECOME EQUALLY REQUISITE TO PRUDENCE AND FRIENDSHIP!

OUR fair readers, possessing a plentiful portion of those refined sensations which constitute the blessings or torments of life, must already have symphathised with Miss O'Mara, whose mind was a chaos of *dismals*, with scarcely one cheering ray to guide her even to *hope!* Although we

had it not in our power circumstantially to announce her actual situation to them; nor, indeed, was there much necessity for such information, as they had witnessed the state of her bosom before she left town, and the conduct of *Juba* at Bank-Top; who had not only snatched her, and her amiable friend, from destruction; but, in a manner so gently soothing, yet so forcibly impressive, grasped the whole of her heart; and declared his passion in terms, which, though not abruptly plain, could hardly be misconstrued. And they had seen, in her consultation with her pillow, how readily she had manufactured the encouraging idea, that, although to a certainty, a *gentleman*, his fortune might not be so great as to place him *far* above the sphere of her attraction: that, indeed, had often been the favourite *chord* of her mental harmony—the *sheet-anchor* of all her floating castles of happiness in em-

bryo! He had all but said, he loved her; and had actually declared, that, in *ten* months, he would be at liberty to declare what he felt. Therefore, when at liberty, (for she was convinced he had spoken the pure dictates of his soul), as his fortune might not place him *far* above thinking seriously of "*so humble an individual*" as herself; why, of course, he would then declare himself—*in due form.* Under the influence of such ideas she had recovered from sickness, and feasted in health; confident, that, where there was such tender and delicate respect, no guile could inhabit: and that, when the tedious period had elapsed, she would see him at her feet, respectfully, though fervently, soliciting her hand.—Such being the state of Eliza's mind, we must leave those fair Readers to appreciate her sensations, when she saw the much-esteemed *Juba*, who, in the system of her arithmetical calcula-

tion, was not to possess a fortune *far* above her expectation, transformed into the *Marquis of Montresor!*—a young nobleman of immense estates!—and already looked up to by the first families in the kingdom!—she could almost have accused herself of *apathy*, for not absolutely dying immediately on the discovery: and blest the poor injured beast for yielding her so excellent a pretext for placing even her *trifling emotions* to the terror of its recent approach.—Though, in fact, none of the party had paid much attention to the poor beast, until the danger had passed by.

After the Earl and Sir William had retired, a profound silence of some minutes was broken by her ladyship; who, breathing a sigh, said—"How much better does "Providence know what is for our good, "than ourselves!—What an escape have "we had!"

Eliza, who instantly associated the idea of escape, with the affair at Bank-Top, artlessly replied—" It was a miraculous " escape, indeed ! How infinitely great " then are our obligations to *Cato* and " *Juba!* I beg pardon!"—And two perverse tears starting into her eyes, she murmured—" I should have said, *Sir* " *George*, and—and *the Marquis*."

" True, my dear ; we certainly are so," said Lady Harriett ; archly smiling at the evident reluctance with which her friend mentioned the *marquis*.—" But that was " not the exact escape which I alluded to, " though it so readily recurred to your " memory."

" Indeed, my lady !" said Eliza—" I " dont recollect our lives being in danger " since."

" The loss of our lives, my dear, would

" have been more afflicting to our friends
" than to ourselves ; as, most probably, our
" destruction would have been momen-
" tarily effected ; and we should have
" died as we have lived, still loving
" and beloved.—The escape which I
" alluded to, Eliza, was—the loss of
" our peace of mind !—of our love !—of
" our friendship ! The tears which you
" now behold, my dear, are those of the
" most pure esteem and pleasure ! We
" have, through the aid of Providence
" alone, been blest with such escape ; and
" humbly should we bless him for his
" goodness !"

" If we have so escaped, my dearest,
" amiable friend, be Heaven blessed and
" praised by me for ever ! For, then,
" would my miseries have been complete !
" But how ?—which way ?—when—where
" did we experience such escape ? For still

" am I totally ignorant of the danger you " allude to."

" Suppose we *both* had loved this *mar*" *quis?* Nay, start not, my dear, for, " happily the danger is over. Tremble " not so, my love!—Look up!—Be cheer" ful! For, if I am not much mistaken, " some smiling days are in our road before " us. Yes, my dear Eliza, there was a " time, nor is it long gone by, when, had " our friend *Juba* sought my affection, I " think he would not have sued in vain: " but his respect, ever so marked, yet " distant, timely repelled all hope of re" turn; so taught me to deprecate an un" requited passion, and strive to discern " some of the most amiable qualities in " Sir William, which, I was soon con" vinced, that *Juba* was reserving for some " other person. Still was my bosom far " from easy, till the little warmth he ex-

" pressed, after having so gallantly rescued " us, shewed me the folly—the madness " of thinking of him, more than as an " amiable friend. Providentially, the " touch which my heart received, in " favour of Sir William, on the intelli- " gence of his accident, tended much to " divert the current of my esteem in his " favour; and his tender letters, during " my illness, rivetted me his entirely. " Thus, my dear Eliza, have I, as I al- " ways did, except in that single instance, " laid my heart before you, and concealed " nothing."

" How mysterious are the ways of " Heaven! O Lady Harriett! Lady Har- " riett!" cried Eliza, hiding her lovely face in her ladyship's bosom—" That very " hour, when his behaviour taught you " caution, his impressive tenderness to " me, secured my heart. He did not

" absolutely say *he loved me,* it is true; " but he whispered to my soul, that, in " ten months, he would be at liberty to " express his feelings; and fervently urged " the intervening hours swiftly to pass " away. Fool that I was! to yield im- " plicit credence to his fervour, and madly " fancy, that, what he said through gal- " lantry, was the ardent impulse of a faith- " ful heart! But, alas! I still thought I " was listening to the amiable *Juba;* who, " possibly, not possessing a fortune much " superior to my own, might be induced " to overlook my unhappy deficiency in " parents and relations! Had I known he " was the Marquis of Montresor, prudence " would have taught me, if not to doubt " his sentiments so amiably expressed, at " all events, to have seen so many family " obstructions to our union, as to have " cautiously eluded every opportunity for " him to speak, or me to listen!"—And

the apprehensive Eliza, drowned in tears, became unable to proceed further.

Lady Harriett soothed her charming friend, with all the tenderness of kind sincerity. She candidly cautioned her to restrain her passion within the bounds of controul; yet not wholly discredit the professions of the marquis; as, from her observations at St. Alban's, she felt very much more inclined to believe that his professions were genuine, than that such a person, so looking, so speaking, could deign to be merely apocryphal.

Highly relieved by the tender soothings of her amiable friend, Eliza again looked up; and, blessing her ladyship for her kind forbearance to rally her on the predicament which she had so unfortunately fallen into, was proceeding to declare her resolution, not to go near the

theatres, nor suffer the marquis again to speak to her, until the ten months were expired, at least. But her noble friend instantly proclaimed her dissent from such a resolution, saying—" I will engenuously " confess to you, my love, I think it " would not be prudent to give him op- " portunities of making many professions " on such a subject, until the period is " elapsed which prevents him from speak- " ing unreservedly: but why should that " prevent us from meeting at the theatres " as usual? If he really possesses senti- " ments in your favour, I am confident, " that, being in your company, and en- " joying your unreserved conversation, " will not lesson your claims on his heart; " or on the esteem of his friend. And, " though I cannot think misconduct in " the marquis even probable, yet, should " he evince a blemish of any magnitude, " by frequently seeing him, and missing

" him, like our other acquaintances, you " will be better enabled, effectually, to " exert that dignified resentment, which " his pride, or versatility of disposition, " might justly authorise, if not imperi- " ously demand: therefore, my love, let " us not refrain from attending the thea- " tres; but, rather, be there full as fre- " quent as usual. Indeed, the oftener " we meet, the more you will see and " hear of him; consequently, the better " you will be enabled to appreciate his " merits and defects. Nor need you be " alarmed at my advice, as to observing " him with the strictest scrutiny, lest, the " more amiable he should appear, the " more you should esteem him; as, be- " lieve me, my love, there is more danger " from one vice in such a man, than from " a thousand virtues."

The grateful Eliza seized the hand of

her much-loved friend, and kissed it. She solemnly vowed she would be guided in her conduct by her ladyship's advice; and fervently promised, that, whenever they should meet their *friends*, she would assume all the courage and composure which she could possibly muster; and would observe them with an eye not less cautious than *impartial*.

The amiable pair then feeling themselves actually weary, from the fatigue of the journey, as well as the various vicissitudes of their minds; finding no inclination for supper, took a crust of bread and a glass of Madeira; and retired to rest, in far better spirits than when they entered the mansion. The one conscious that she had acted from the dictates of honour, virtue, and the purest friendship: —the other, in a manner, authorised by her amiable friend, to flatter herself that

she was really esteemed by her beloved marquis; and that, when at liberty to declare himself, the difference, in point of fortune, would not prove an insuperable bar to her happiness.

CHAPTER III.

HE WHO NOTHING EXTENUATES, NOR SETS DOWN OUGHT IN MALICE, THOUGH HE MAY HAPPEN TO ERR A LITTLE IN HIS CRITICISMS, CAN NEVER HEARTILY OFFEND.

IN consequence of having enjoyed much better rest than she had expected, and being frequently encouraged in her darling hopes, by the cheering conversation of her soothing friend, Eliza had so far recovered her health, as absolutely to attend the theatre on the Monday evening, with almost her usual portion of spirits.

Just before the first act of the *West Indian* was over, our little party was joined by *Cato* and *Juba*, (for the ladies had resolved still to call them so, not only for brevity sake, but to elude reflections of a sombre kind, which the mention of *marquis* generally gave rise to), who, after their usual compliments, informed the ladies, that they had been to Covent-Garden theatre; but, an apology having been made for the *sudden indisposition* of a performer, whose place could not readily be supplied, so as to yield them a probability of experiencing satisfaction, they had come to see if they would be more fortunate at the Lyceum.—As it would be cruel if *sudden indisposition* occurred in both theatres on the same evening. "Indeed," observed *Cato*, "I cannot say "that I am pleased with such kind of "apologies; and, as *nine-tenths* of them "are *self-caused*, it is not a trifling ex-

" cuse, which, in my opinion, should be " accepted, on such occasions. *Garrick* " and *Barry* seldom or ever required any " to be made for their absence when their " names were announced; neither does " *Mr. Kemble*: for they, generally, *were* " their own masters, and he, generally, *is* " so. How much more satisfactory, then, " must it be to the public, when, anxious " to see favourite performers, in popular " characters, they can go to the theatre " with confidence, certain that such per- " formers are their own masters, than " when they feel it but an even chance " that they may be disappointed by their " *favourites* being suddenly coerced by " their *master*—the *brandy-bottle!* And " little less is the culpability of those, " who, having so potently, and so fre- " quently, sacrificed at the shrine of Bac- " chus, as to debilitate their bodies, and " render their mental faculties imbecile,

" will still pertinaciously continue their
" occupation, and torture our feelings
" while enacting characters, labouring
" under feebleness and lassitude, more
" adapted to a *bed* in an *infirmary*, than
" to the exhibiting of nervous and exhili-
" rating traits of Nature. Yet, great as
" the drawback on our pleasure must have
" been, such *spectacles* were suffered to
" continue before us for months—for years
" —for life, because those *bon vivants*
" would not exert a sufficient degree of
" fortitude, by a moderate indulgence of
" the bottle, only, to determine to re-
" cover their health, vigour, and excel-
" lence!—Witness *Weston!*—Witness
" poor *Suett!*—Witness—but light lie
" the ashes of those men of talent! who,
" however much they wounded the feel-
" ings of their audience, while recollect-
" ing what they *once* were, and what they
" *then* appeared, actually injured no one

"but themselves.—Yet, may not the "*suicide* plead the same apology?"—The ringing of the prompter's bell silenced the sermonizing of *Cato*; and the party immediately became attentive to the scene.

A little *fracas* taking place in the pit, at the end of the second act; and the *rush* of half-price-company, incommoding on the conclusion of the third, prevented any material conversation, until the end of the fourth act; when *Juba* observed, that he thought *Mr. Melvin* got through the difficult part of *Belcour* with spirit and ability; considering that he evidently appeared to labour under a cold, or some other indisposition.

"That young man may acquire a most "respectable portion of celebrity, if he "will determine so to do," said *Cato*. "He possesses many of those dry, cool,

" turns, in his comedy, which glow more " pleasingly than the most vivid flashes of " some eminent performers. His *Jacob*, " in the *Adopted Child*, and several " other characters in popular pieces, have " stamped his fame as an actor of high " talent; and he only wants a little *for-* " *titude* to enable him justly to maintain " a seat in the first class."

Eliza having been too intent on stealing a glance at *Juba*, to think of giving her opinion on the merits either of performers or piece, *Lady Harriett* asked *Cato* how he liked *Mr. Stapleton* in *Major O'Flaherty*; it being the first night of his appearance on the London boards.

" When he becomes a little familiar to " a London audience, my lady, I shall not " wonder to see him a favourite, and a " tolerable substitute for the incomparable " *Johnstone*. He has figure, powers, and

"understanding; and, as he possesses a "polite and liberal education, he will, of "course, be able to *read* the *dramatis per-* "*sonæ* of a comedy with such accuracy as "to comprehend the difference between "*Major O'Flaherty* and *Corporal O'Fla-* "*herty*; or an *Irish gentleman* and a "*Connought bog-trotter*; which many of "our performers, of that class of charac- "ters, most evidently have not done. He, "too, may, possibly, be able to appre- "ciate the requisite dialects for characters "brought from *Ulster*, *Munster*, or *Con-* "*nought*; which differ far more than our "Yorkshire *Frank Oatlands*, as spoken "by those well-discriminating comedians, "*Emery* and *Knight*, and the west of "England *Tony Lumkin* of *Blanchard*, "that excellent substitute for the inimita- "ble *Quick*. Hitherto our *Major O'Fla-* "*herty's* and *Dennis Bulgruddery's* have "all spoken in the same local dialect; and

" while one eminent performer assimilates " the language of a *gentleman* from *Cork*, " to the rough brogue of a *peasant* from " *Sligo*; another will give us that of a " *brogue-maker* from *Colerain*, in the " loud, shrill, smooth, tone of a *Cork-* " *whisper!*—But it pleases the *gods!* and " many of our performers seem so very " anxious to cling to their protection, that " the good opinion of the more rational " part of the audience, if it do not follow " of course, is generally deemed a mere " secondary object of consideration."

After the conclusion of the *farce*, Eliza did venture to express a kind of disapprobation of it, by saying—" I do not feel " very partial to these ***Hit or Miss*** kind " of extravagant *farces*; I laugh, it is " true; and I do so when viewing the " grotesque figures playing their anticks at " the front of puppet-shows in a country

" fair ;—because their is somewhat so very " ludicrous in them."

" And, I am sorry to say, Madam, " that you must have experienced a suf- " ficient portion of the ludicrous here. " Indeed, the piece, at best, is a mere " ill-made *possett*.—Take away the adul- " terated *wine* of the principal character, " and you have the *London beverage* " for children remaining—one part *milk*, " and two parts *water*. It is dreadful " for performers of real merit to be thrust " into characters in which they must " make themselves absolute *buffoons* ; or " be content to appear as moving statues " only ! If such *stuff* be really conso- " nant to the taste of the times, why, " it is very well !—if not—unless we can " *weave* better articles among us, we " had better rummage the dusty *looms*

" of the early part of the last century,
" for some *remnants* of those authors pro-
" ductions which could both please and
" instruct."

CHAPTER IV.

THE THUNDER STORM WILL DESTROY AN ALOE IN ITS BLOOM, WITH AS MUCH EASE AS IT TEARS UP A THISTLE.

As frequenting the theatres had again become highly entertaining to Eliza; and as Lady Harriett, from having taken Sir William in her train for mere convenience, really began to conceive satisfaction in seeing him there, the ladies resolved to enjoy a play one night in every week, at least; they therefore had issued the requisite mandates to the earl and the baronet;

but, just as the party had risen from dinner, and orders were given for the carriage, a printed paper was delivered, announcing the death of the most amiable of her sex. Consequently that the theatres would be shut till further notice.

The gentleman read the bill—looked grave, and sighed. The ladies perused it, and, casting up their eyes towards Heaven, as gazing after the fleeting spirit of the departed *saint,* they sighed—and tears dropped freely. Therefore, seeing their lovely friends so very low spirited, the gentlemen took an early leave, promising to call on the morrow; by which time they hoped, that the certainty of a soul so pure meeting an eternity of bliss, in the mansions of the blessed, would have soothed their spirits to their accustomed complacency.

The ladies took their tea in profound gloom, and seemed to encourage melancholy, by repeatedly perusing all the recent bulletins ;—when her ladyship said, while the tears trickled down the lovely cheeks of each—" We have a long account
" of afflictions heaped on holy Job ;
" though, probably, they might have
" been dispensed at various intervals, so as
" to have occupied a modern *age* in their
" distribution ; but, here we have the
" afflictions of an *age* all endured in one
" short year ! Yet, with meekness and
" piety, unexampled, the beauteous *saint*
" patiently smiled at all her grief, indeed !
" While *angels* would have wept at woes
" so sharpened, but that they knew the
" joys ineffable, prepared to recompence
" the blessed *fair* in the regions of eter-
" nity, would, in few hours of that end-
" less space, amply compensate her for all
" her ills !"

"O my sweet friend!" exclaimed Eliza —"what must have been her parents "pangs, when worth—when virtue, so "immense and pure, was torn from their "embrace, never—never to be seen or "heard again! Well might the groans "of such a parting, shake an empire to "its centre!—O, merciful Father! heal "the deep-struck wounds of such an aw-"ful and soul-rending moment!—Pity the "Parent, and restore the King!"

CHAPTER V.

WHERE IS THE LOVELY FEMALE, HOWEVER AMIABLE, HOWEVER SENSIBLE, WHOSE HEART WILL NOT EXPAND WITH SATISFACTION, WHEN FIRST APPEARING IN A DRESS WHICH FANCY DEPICTS AS RENDERING HER MORE ENGAGING THAN USUAL!

SO exceedingly affected were our lovely *inseparables*, at the recent awful event, mentioned in our last chapter, that they actually secluded themselves from all company, except the earl and Sir William, for ten days! and, for three days more, vainly essayed to reconcile themselves to

the sable robes indispensable to the solemn occasion. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive how long they might have hesitated to appear in public, so attired, had not their confidential waiting-woman (dreadfully alarmed lest dressing should become interdicted in the family) happily discovered that she never saw the ladies *look half so lovely as in their beautiful black dresses!* Though it had so happened, during the mourning for the deceased Earl of Hankering, the very same confidential waiting-woman, used incessantly to exclaim against the *nasty black things,* which made every body look frightful, if they were ever so handsome! But there might have been a *feeling* difference between durable family sables and court-mourning. However, as the ladies had forgotten Mrs. Pinem's frequent complaints of the *nasty black things* then worn; and heard, very distinctly, her

positive assertion, that she never saw them *look half so lovely as in their beautiful black dresses;* they resolved, on the morrow, to assume them in earnest; and to make their appearance in Kensington Gardens.

Sure enough, on the morrow, about three o'clock, looking, if possible, more lovely than usual, because confidently assured that they never looked *half so well,* our ladies entered the park, and pursued their walk towards the gardens; but, before they had reached the gate, they were pursued, and met, by Eliza's masquerade *coachman,* the identical Sir Yep Flankem (leaning on a gentleman's arm) no les than three times.

"Bless us!" exclaimed Lady Harriett, on their last meeting, just before entering the gardens—"Pinem cannot have flat-

" tered us so much as I thought she did;
" for, to a certainty, my love, we have
" stricken those *deer*."

" They must be very full of admiration,
" or very full of impertinence, I am sure,"
said Eliza—" but I will not take upon
" me to determine which. I wonder who
" they are! I think I recollect the voice
" of one of them; though I cannot call to
" mind where."

" I am sure I have seen the face of the
" tallest, myself," said her ladyship—
" but I am as ignorant of the *where* as you
" are. However, they have had enough
" of *us* by this time, I suppose; and are
" gone on the gaze after *handsomer faces*,
" of course." What a pity, that no gentleman was near to make a profusion of extravagant asseverations, as to their

beauty, form, elegance—and all that, for so self-denying a compliment.

Having entered the gardens, her ladyship complained of some gravel in her shoe torturing her foot; so walked near the wall to a recess, not many yards from the gate. There the shoe was pulled off—the torturing gravel thrown on the grass, and consigned to eternal obscurity for its presumption; when, just as the ladies were going to rise from the seat, in order to pursue their walk, they heard some persons approaching; and very distinctly heard the following sentences:—

First voice—" —for I sho'dn't wonder, " if so be as you got *milled* by the *big-* " *wigs*, and *queered* by the *learned-dozen* " out of a verdict for ten thousand of the " *rag*."

Second voice.—" Poh ! D—— the da-
" mages ! *Kick* me if I would mind though
" they were twenty thousand ; if I was
" but sure the business would stop there."

First voice.—" Hey ! What, you think
" there'd be a *row,* do you !—Damme, I'll
" stand by you, foot and hand ! And I'll
" pick you up half a score more, that will
" take a *milling* as kindly as ever the *glut-*
" *ton* did. So let me advise you to come to
" the *scamper* with her at once ; if you
" think you can be sure of getting hold of
" the *game,* when the *prads* and the *rat-*
" *tler* are all ready for starting !"

Second voice.—" Why, I should think
" I could manage that, Jack ; for it would
" be"—(And, no doubt, observing the sable garb of Eliza, who sat close to the end of the recess), the voice cried—" Hum!

"Yes, I'll bet two to one that the horse "wins."—And, close by the recess, as if not observing the ladies, passed Sir Yep and his *erudite* friend.

"Those *fellows* are after some *female*, "I am confident," said Lady Harriett—"and, if I am not very much mistaken, "they have mischief both in their minds "and hearts."

"Then, most devoutly, do I wish that "I knew the person whom they are prowl-"ing after!" said Eliza—"as I should "feel myself happy in disconcerting the "insiduous machinations of libertines. "And one of them must be a person of "consequence, too, by making so light "of twenty thousand pounds damages—"*if that would but be all.* Of course, "the danger of the person threatened is "still the more imminent; and she, pos-

"sibly, may not have the slightest sus-"picion of the scheme concerting against "her. I certainly was intended for a *man*, "my lady; and actually feel all the symp-"toms of *knight-errantry*; nay, so much "am I urged to rescue distressed inno-"cence, that I really think, I, at this in-"stant, could stand *fire* against those *ruf-"fians*, and die in so glorious a cause."

"I wish we had happened to have over-"heard the name of the person threatened "—or even of themselves. But of that "there is little chance now, my dear; as, "I perceive, they are turning towards the "palace, and we, most probably, shall "see them no more. So, what think "you, of walking gently homewards? "It is now nearly four o'clock; and, "if we stop to take a peep at the eques-"trians, it will be five by the time we get "home."

Having sauntered about half way to the bridge, the ladies were overtaken by a very elegant woman, mounted on a most beautiful horse, which tripping as it passed them, was checked by the fair rider somewhat too severely, and became restive. As the lady was an excellent horse-woman, and possessed no small degree of spirit, she supported a very warm contest with the restive animal, for several minutes; while our ladies, alarmed at the unmanageable plungings and caperings, made the best of their way to the bridge, in order to get into the inclosed field; but, before they had reached the small grove, near the river head, not hearing the horse, they turned round, just in time to see the lady dismounted. She, however, was very soon re-seated in her saddle, by the very gentlemen who had passed them in the recess; and the beast having convinced his mistress that he could be master when he pleased,

cantered off very quietly; to the surprise and satisfaction of all the beholders.

Our ladies, pleased at the conclusion of a contest, fortunately harmless, quitting the park at the Grosvenor Gate, pursued their way homeward: but, crossing Brook Street, heard a voice exclaim—"By heaven! nothing shall prevent me from getting hold of her!" and were actually run against by the same two gentlemen; who, apologizing for their heedlessness, but, without stopping, turned back again.

"Those men seem so desperately bent on the execution of their scheme, that the fervour of their arguments on the iniquitous subject, has deprived them of their eye-sight, I think," said Lady Harriett—"I protest they had nearly pushed me down."

"What a look the tall one gave me, "when he had nearly pushed me down!" said Eliza—"I should not wonder if that "very lady, who got the fall from her "horse just now, is the object of their "meditations; for I very plainly saw the "tallest of them shake her by the hand, "after having re-seated her. I wish we "had thought to have asked who she was. "Some of the company must, certainly, "have known her; and, in that case, we "might have given her an anonymous "hint, which might have put her upon "her guard; and, possibly, have pre-"served her from destruction."

"Though evidently a very fine woman, "my dear Eliza, her countenance seemed "to me to evince a confidence which ren-"dered such a caution not so *very* neces-"sary. Nor do I think a lady of family,

" and even moderate delicacy, would so
" publicly have exerted herself in so dan-
" gerous an amusement, merely to evince
" her skill and determined courage in the
" management of an unruly horse. No,
" no, I rather apprehend that those men
" have some lady of more refined manners
" in view; and, as we neither know her
" nor them, we must leave her to the
" protection of that Providence who can
" succour the pure in heart, even by a
" miracle, if consistent with His all-wise
" decree; and can inflict the direst ven-
" geance on the lawless and brutal ravisher,
" even when thinking himself the most
" secure. Ha! The door is open for us.
" I declare the Earl and Sir William are
" yonder; and we have yet to dress!"—
The ladies, therefore, hastened up stairs; where, having received a little aid, and a great many compliments, from the very

clever, and good-natured, Mrs. Pinem, they soon found themselves enabled to appear before the gentlemen, looking charmingly in *beautiful black*, and in high spirits.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW FORTUNATE IT IS FOR MODERN AUTHORS, THAT A WELL-TIMED COMPLIMENT IS DEEMED A PASSABLE COMPENSATION FOR WIT AND ELOQUENCE!

THE gentlemen were so extremely pleased to see the ladies possess such a flow of spirits, on returning from the toilet, that they were nearly as profuse of compliments, on their elegant appearanee in *beautiful black*, as Mrs. Pinem had been: and the ladies, roused to their usual vivacity by such profusions, which they really fancied intitled to some degree of credit,

as every body made them, soon acquired sufficient resolution to promise, that, on the morrow, they would attend the gentlemen to the theatre, in order to see the new opera—*Gustavas Vasa.* Accordingly, being punctual in their attendance—at dinner, they were all in their box in excellent time, to enjoy the performance of a very pretty overture: and, as their *theatrical friends,* on surveying the box-book, had observed places taken by our party, they had ordered places in the same box; but did not arrive until just as the curtain was rising; so had only time to make their bows, and take a glance from the ladies, before they took their seats and became attentive.

The first act over, the ladies were anticipating the usual question from either *Cato* or *Juba;* nor would they have been disappointed, had not a political alterca-

tion, supported with no small degree of fervour, already commenced in an adjoining box, between two of the most vociferous politicians of the court of common-council. One of the gentlemen had been rather severe on his antagonist, and had treated an observation of his, relative to the hasty retreat of the enemy, in Portugal, in a manner so sarcastic as to raise a laugh against him from the whole box.—Concluding his philippic in the following words:—"*Ve* knows what's what as well "as you and your friends do, Mr. Sharp. "*Ve* know that Marshal Massena is an "old *bird*, and *vont* be caught by *chaff* "only. No, no, he's an old *trader*.— "Give him an *inch* and he'll soon take an "*ell!* He's no sleezy *Scotch* or *Irish* "*lawn*, but bang-up *French cambric*— "take my word for him. He's up to the "*thumb*; and can give it *ven* buying, "and take it *ven* selling, as *vell* as e'er a

" gentleman in the *trade;* or e'er another
" general in the great *Napoleon's* service.
" Yes, yes; they'll find him a man of
" business yet, Mr. Sharp. He has taken
" *stock* of his *adversaries* pretty exactly,
" I'll venture to say: and though *ve* may
" now boast of *a* many brave *regiments* in
" *whole pieces,* I'm a good deal out, in
" my *measurement,* if they *vont* pretty
" soon become what you may call *short*
" *remnants.* And if he should come back
" and carry his orders from Paris into ex-
" ecution;—if he, with his confounded
" sharp *bagonets,* should push our troops
" into the sea—*vat* shall *ve* do then—Mr.
" Sharp?"

Mr. Sharp, who was naturally choleric, and radically loyal, felt the last *thrust* of his adversary's *confounded sharp bagonet,* as pushed a little too far *home;* therefore, eager to repay his eloquence with interest,

he spoke for some minutes so rapidly, as to be wholly unintelligible. At length, being compelled to stop, in order to breathe a little, he became somewhat more articulate, and proceeded—"As to pushing "us into the *sea*, 'tis all *my eye*, Mr. "Smooth. *Ve* don't mind your *bagonets* "any more than *a row of corking pins*: "but, mayhap, *ve* may have *bagonets* "too, that will prick as sharp as *lancets* "—aye, and broad-swords, that 'll cut as "keen as *razors*—Mr. Smooth. And, as "to your Marshall Massena, or the prince "of—*what-do-you-call-him?* *vy*, if he "marches towards us by the *yard*, *ve'll* "soon make him march back by the "*fathom!*—And *vat* do you say to that, "Mr. Smooth?—*Vat* should *ve* do, in"deed! *Vy*, if he did push us a little "*vay* into the *sea*, *ve* could fight there as "*vell* as upon dry land. *Vereas* your "great *Master Nappy* don't understand

"fighting by sea, not at all, it seems; and, "damme! he ha'n't got *nothing* there to "fight for!—No, not in the *Vest* nor "East Indies, neither, by this time.— "No, I say, again, not a place big enough "to put his own *nose* into; or to fill one "of my *two-penny tin snuff-boxes!* Then "as for"—The second act commenced, a genereal cry of "*silence*" gave a truce to a dispute most wonderful eloquentially, and not a little entertaining.

The preparative postures which the political combatants threw themselves into, at the conclusion of the second act, held the audience near them in mute expectation of another debate, equally instructive as the last: but, already feeling a little sore at the sarcastic *pushings* and *thrustings* which each had received from the other, they kept strictly on their guard, watching each others motions; and rather

waiting assault than feeling inclined to make a fresh attack; so that they had actually approached no nearer to the renewal of hostilities, than a *hum* from one, and a *ha* from the other, when the third act commenced, and set the pit in a roar at the apparent disappointment of the adjacent boxes.

Resolved not to lose an opportunity of obtaining the opinions of their friends, as to the merits of the opera which they had just seen, the ladies were turning towards the gentleman for the purpose of putting the question, rather than waiting for it; but were again interrupted by a gentleman who sat next to *Cato*, exclaiming very magisterially—"Bravo! Bravo! "Bravo! A very excellent opera upon my "honour! And a very happy compliment "to the King of Sweden on his arrival "here."

"And a very happy arrival for the au-
"thor, you will allow, I presume, Sir,"
said *Cato*.

"I don't exactly understand you, Sir," replied the gentleman; who, it appeared, was the editor of a weekly paper, honest enough to come and judge for himself.—
"I meant to say, that the author had
"paid a very great compliment to the
"King of Sweden."

"And I, Sir," returned *Cato*—"meant
"to say that the King of Sweden had paid
"a much greater compliment to the au-
"thor of *Gustavus Vasa*."

"I cannot say, Sir, that I exactly per-
"ceive that," retorted the gentleman.

"No, Sir!" cried *Cato*—"You surely
"will allow that the King of Sweden

" might have lived happy, in conscious
" dignity of having been the faithful
" ally of the King of Great Britain—
" the patron of commerce, and the as-
" serter of the independence of Europe—
" without the appearance of this opera.
" But I am rather apprehensive, that all
" the care and attention of the managers,
" in getting it up with such elegance—
" the charming singing of *Mrs. Dickons*
" and *Mr. Incledon*—the interesting ap-
" pearance and most impressive action of
" *Mrs. Johnson*, who seems so determined
" to obtain applause, that she elicits fresh
" beauties every time she appears—the
" happy comicality of *Mr. Emery*—and
" the inimitable payful rusticity of *Mrs.*
" *C. Kemble*, so excellently supported by
" the true comic humour of *Mr. Fawcett*
" —would all have failed in saving the
" life of the piece, had not a grateful
" public, feelingly alive to the situation of
" the monarch, received the compliment,

"at such a juncture, as bankers *paper*—
"for sterling *gold*; and, as such, suf-
"fered it to obtain a little currency. The
"music, certainly, is pretty; but there is
"not enough of it to protect the peace, as
"a mere vehicle of sound. Indeed, I can
"hardly think that the author did intend
"it as a compliment to the King of Swe-
"den; or he, surely, would have made
"*Gustavus Vasa* a more prominent cha-
"racter.—And I am confident he did not
"write it in compliment to *Mr. Young*."

"What a charming little *Pickle Miss S. Booth* makes!" said Lady Harriett, as the last act of the farce was drawing to a conclusion.—"It must be a very favourable character, I presume, by so many ladies having attempted it."

"It is a character, my lady," returned *Cato*—"which will always be popular;

" and has been the medium of introducing
" several performers into first-rate notice;
" consequently is generally caught at by
" our young female actresses, as a pass-
" port to the first class of the profession.
" I have seen many attempt it, and will
" do the present young lady the justice to
" say, that where *one* has performed it
" better, a *dozen* has fallen short of her
" abilities. But, did she not play the part
" half so well, her lovely countenance
" would insure the applause of a British
" audience."

" I cannot say that I admire the cha-
" racter of *Tag*, in the extravagant man-
" ner which it is now played," observed
Eliza.—" It reminds me of our manager
" in the country, introducing a *dancing*
" *bear*, with a long staff and a lanthorn!
" We all laughed very heartily, it is true;
" but not at the character—no, or risibi-

"lity was commanded by the grotesque "caricature of some of our London watch- "men."

"I am not surprised, Madam, that the "character of *Tag*, as now performed, "should have caught your attention," said *Cato*—"nor will it long elude that of the "managers. In fact, it is highly neces- "sary that those gentlemen should be on "their guard;—for, as some of our *clowns* "are becoming very aspiring *lads*, if suf- "fered long to turn *mad-authors* into "*mad actors*, they may soar a stride "higher, and present us with mad *Mer- "cutios*—mad *Marplots*—mad *Bobadils* "—and mad *Copper-Captains!* I, ladies, "have seen some of our first-rate come- "dians in *Tag*; and, though it may not "actually be deemed a first-rate character, "they did not, by any means, seem to be "out of their element."

"But you will grant, my dear Sir, that
"such in characters, and, in farce, too, a
"little of the extravagant may be allow-
"able," said *Juba*.

"Most undoubtedly—provided it do
"not exceed all bounds—of *all* probabi-
"lity. I, for instance, should not have
"had the slightest objection to Miss
"O'Mara's manager giving his watchman
"a *drop of a dram*, and suffering him to
"*reel* a little: but I would have given
"my determined *veto* against the substi-
"tution of the *dancing bear* so accoutred,
"in any thing but *pantomime*, or *puppet-*
"*show*."

"O yes! I was there at the time," cried Sir William—who had caught hold of the *bear*, *veto*, and *puppet-show*.

"You there, Sir William!" exclaimed

the earl, restraining a laugh with some difficulty.—" Where, in the name of won-
" der, were you ?"

" Where ! Why, at the *puppet-show* in
" Piccadilly ; when the bear trode upon
" the toe of a gouty gentleman, who, for
" want of room, was sitting, with many
" others, on the stage ; and threw the
" whole house into confusion."

Fortunately for Sir William, the curtain having dropped, the company was quitting the theatre ; or, no doubt, there would have been an uproar of laughter by all who had heard so laughable a mistake converted into so laughable an anecdote.

CHAPTER VII.

WHY SHOULD WE WONDER AT THE LANGUAGE OF THOSE WHOSE CONVERSATION IS CHIEFLY AMONG COACHMEN, SMACKING OF THE WHIP EVEN IN LOVE AFFAIRS!

THE ladies having rallied the baronet most unmercifully during supper, at the *mal-apropos* recollection of his Piccadilly *puppet-show*; and the earl making many laughable observations on the astonishment depicted in the countenance of *Cato*, and the apparent agony which *Juba* experienced to restrain a laugh, at the oddity of the mistake; the morning had so

far advanced, before the little party had separated, that it was turned of noon before the ladies made their appearance at the breakfast table: soon after which the servant delivered a letter to Eliza; saying —"It was brought by Sir Yep Flankem's "servant, madam."

"Sir Yep Flankem's servant!" exclaimed the young lady—"Why, we were in-"formed by the *Courier*, when in Shef-"field, that Sir Yep Flankem had died of "a mortification!"

"True, my dear, we were so; but, it "seems, he is yet living—to give *morti-*"*fication* to others."—And her ladyship could not refrain a smile at Eliza's non-agreeable surprise.

Eliza asked if the servant waited? "No," was the answer; and the man retired.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!—What a woe-be-
"gotten countenance!—Ha, ha, ha! poor
"Eliza! So, methinks, a criminal would
"look on receiving his death-warrant. Is
"it so terrible a thing, my dear, to re-
"ceive a love-letter? for, depend on it,
"that is one. And, no doubt, it will
"prove one of the class of—*Lusus Na-*
"*turæ.*"

"I cannot read it, Lady Harriett. It
"is such a strange kind of—I think I had
"better return it, my lady.—I really don't
"understand it."

"And yet, if a certain *marquis* had
"written a formal love-epistle to my sweet
"friend, I am shrewdly inclined to sus-
"pect, that she would have understood
"that.—And I also suspect, that *we*
"should not *pout*, and look so very angry
"about it, neither—as if *we* were appre-

"hensive that the *naughty man* wanted "to marry the marquis, instead of *our*-"*selves*. Prithee, my love, do smile at "the oddity: and give it us with all the "solemn pomp which the subject so justly "merits—from such a hero."

"You are the most cruel—teazing—"unmerciful—I wish I could catch your "ladyship in such a disagreeable embar-"rassment—I declare"—

"Ha, ha, ha! A poor little *mouse*, "tumbled and tossed about by a merciless "kitten, would be in an enviable situa-"tion to mine, most certainly, my dear: "but really, if I was as much in love as "you—were going to confess yourself to "be, I presume, I positively would read "that letter very seriously—if I could; "and, at all events, would return a very "serious answer."

"Well, I'll try.—Indeed, Lady Har-
"riett, I cannot read it! Do, have a little
"mercy, and read it for me. I wish it
"had not come here! or that I could see
"it without being so much affected at the
"sight of it! But, really, my dear friend,
"my heart bodes no good from that same
"letter; and I most sincerely wish it had
"never been written; or that, with pro-
"priety, it might remain unanswered."

"Psha!—Nonsense! Why those tears?
"Well! as you are so very terribly serious
"on the subject; which, by the bye, my
"dear Eliza, I cannot say that I feel any
"very serious necessity for; why, I will
"endeavour to convey the sentiments
"of the gentleman to your purturbed
"bosom, with all due gravity and deco-
"rum.—Hem!"—

Letter from Sir Yep Flankem to Miss Eliza O'Mara.

'Madam,

'As my sisters are constantly '*currying* and *rubbing me down* about 'my single situation in life, and a parcel 'of nonsense; and say that a man of my 'fortune, without a wife, is as badly off 'as a carriage without a *wheel;* and must 'be as uneasy as a *horse* on the road with- 'out a *shoe,* I have brushed up the *ham- 'mer-cloth* of my resolution, and am de- 'termined for once to submit to the *coup- 'ling-rein,* and try how I can *run* in the '*harness of matrimony.*'—"Bless me! "Eliza, this is admirable! Here we have "wit and eloquence when neither were "expected. — But to proceed."—'I am 'free to confess, Madam, that I *kicked* 'and—*nestled about*—and *tossed up my 'head,* most confoundedly, before I would

'suffer the *old maids* to put the *bit* into
'my mouth.'—"This, my dear, is both
"candid and honest. He confesses that
"he kicked, nestled, and tossed up his
"head, till he got the *bit* in his mouth;
"but, having once received it, he, no
"doubt, will *lead* and *drive*, like any
"lamb!—But I beg pardon, for pre
"suming to mar the gentleman's wit by
"my observations. Therefore, anticipa-
"ting your anxiety, my dear, to hear the
"whole of so exquisite a composition, I
"will immediately resume the text."—
'However, Miss, when I had *champed* it
'a little I thought it felt easier in my
'mouth than I could have expected; so,
'fancying that you, my dear Miss, would
'make a charming BROOM to stick in my
'bosom, or ride by my side, on the
'*dickey*'—

"Filthy! Abominable! Make a stable

"broom of me! Surely your ladyship "must be tired of reading such fulsome "trash by this time."

"Indeed but I am not, my love. Nor "do I conceive this to be such very trash. "Broom is in capitals, Eliza; consequent-"ly, must have more importance attached "to it than we are aware of.—Oh, Wil-"liam! I was just going to ring for you. "Tell the coachman to come hither. Our "coachman has the appearance of a ra-"tional being, and may be able to explain "this riddle.—Oh! John! What am I to "understand by a coachman sticking a "charming *broom* in his bosom?"

"A beautiful *nosegay*, to be sure, my "lady," said the coachman, smiling.

"You are perfectly right, John.— "What a blockhead was I!—You may go,

" John.—There, my dear; did I not tell
" you that the capital letters conveyed a
" capital compliment: or, at least, an
" importance which we were not aware of.
" —Stick you in his bosom, or place you
" by his side on the *dickey* as a beautiful
" *nosegay!* Upon my word!—What do
" you think of that, my love!—Well,
" well!—A truce to my nonsense, and let
" us proceed to the business of the *broom.*"
' —And not having forgot the taste of
' your delicious lips since the night of the
' masquerade'—

" O the monster, exclaimed Eliza, uplifting both her hands.—" Then the *brute*
" who behaved so insolently to me, and
" endangered the life of—of—of"—

" Of—of—of the Marquis of Montresor
" —out with it, my dear! Well, and
" what then?"

"Then!—Then, for goodness sake, "my lady, commit the horrid scroll to "the flames."

"*Then* how shall we be able to answer "it, my love? For, I am confident that "your good sense will deem an answer, "of some kind, necessary.—But, as we "are near the end of the *love-letter*, let "us try if we can get through it without "further annotations."—'when I got 'punished for my presumption more than 'ever I punished my *off-wheel-horse* for 'being a little *restive*; why, I deter-'mined, at once, to marry you, my dear 'Miss:—and so I shall leave the terms of 'the settlement—and fortune—and chil-'dren—and all that, to your own option; 'and shall *whisk* my solicitor to your door 'the day after to-morrow, and *drop* him 'from my *barouche* to arrange all the

'*coupling-geer*, and fix the day when we
'are to take the first *tug* at the *splinter-bar* of wedlock together.

'Your most humble,
'and most faithfully devoted,
'*Yep Flankem.*'

"Bless me, my dear Lady Harriett! "what makes you fix your eyes so in- "tentensely on me?"

"Just to see where the *coupling-reins* "and *geer* are to be fixed, which are to "yoke you both to the same *splinter-bar* "of wedlock.—Eliza O'Mara with Sir "Yep Flankem! Ha, ha, ha, ha! Well! "If the experiment could be tried for a "month, what a sight would it be, to see "you *tugging*, like a poor little *wheat-ear*, when caught in a *trap*, cheek-by- "jole with so charming a yoke-fellow as

"Sir Yep must naturally make, from his "scientific knowledge of his *coupling* and "running in *harness*."

"And, like a poor little *wheat-ear*, ex-"tricated from my yoke to be led to my "grave!"

"Psha! I want to see you laugh at this "precious epistle; and not spoil it with "tears."

"I cannot see it in a laughable point of "view, my dear lady Harriet! That the "*monster* is serious, is but too apparent, "from his compliment of *carte-blanche*, "as to settlement. And as I now see that "an answer is absolutly necessary, I dread "his ruffianly conduct, should he feel in-"censed at my refusal."

"Don't be alarmed on that account, my

"love; for if he dare presume to be troublesome, we will set the marquis at him—he will soon tame him again."

"No, my lady; though despair would be the immediate consequence of such a union, I think I could venture to rush into it, rather than again be the means of endangering the life of that most amiable man by a single murmer of mine."

"Poh! This is making bad worse, my dear! If he should turn a little restive, we will find a way to quiet him, I'll warrant, without putting him at the *off-wheel.* Well! how do you find yourself? Will you write the answer; or shall I attempt it?"

"You, by all means, my dearest friend! If he were to wait for an an-

"swer of my writing, he would wait for "ever; for I feel myself totally incapable "of such a task."

"Very well! If I am to be secretary, "be you my clerk. Reach me the writing-"desk. There! Now I am seated—duly "prepared for the awful ceremony. And "you shall see me *brush* this yoke-fellow "of your's down as smooth as a *race-"horse*."

Letter from Lady Harriett Loveplumb to Sir Yep Flankem, Bart.

Sir,

'Earnestly requested by my 'much-loved friend, Miss Eliza O'Mara, 'to acknowledge the receipt of your letter 'of this morning; and to convey to you 'her sentiments on so awful a subject; I, 'with much reluctance, take up the pen,

'because I am very apprehensive that the 'purport of my letter will not exactly '*couple* with your expectations.

'I am to assure you, Sir Yep, that 'your letter was perused with all the 'solemnity that the subject, and the style, 'were capable of impressing. Miss O'Mara, 'who is really a good and gentle *creature*; 'and, in my humble opinion, would *tug* 'as kindly and as freely at the *splinter-* '*bar of wedlock* as any *blood-horse* in the 'kingdom; requests me to make you her 'best thanks for the honour which you 'have conferred on her, by making such 'unreserved professions of your *coupling-* '*esteem*, and your truly liberal determi- 'nation to leave the terms of settlement, '*and all that*, to her option: but, hap- 'pening to be a little *restive* at the *punish-* '*ment* received from you at the masque- 'rade, (but, whether at the *off-wheel* or

'*near wheel,* I will not presume to say), 'she is sensible she could not take your '*bit* of matrimony into her mouth with-'out more *nestling, kicking,* and *tossing* '*her head,* than she wishes at present to 'endure. Therefore begs that you will 'suffer her still to *frisk* about in the '*pastures* of freedom until she happens to 'meet with some noble *phæton* whose '*collar of wedlock* she may be induced to 'flatter herself will sit somewhat more 'easily upon her.

'Your most obedient humble servant,

'*Harriett Loveplumb.*'

"Why do you shake your head at my "florid epistle, Eliza? Depend on it, my "dear, I could not have written in a more "appropriate style to answer *our* purpose. "This letter will exhibit *his* to himself, "in colours so truly ludicrous, that, if he "be not a greater fool than I take him

" for, he will consign both letter and sub-
" ject to instant oblivion. And, under
" such impression, will I immediately dis-
" patch it to the enamoured *brother-
" whip*."—Then ringing the bell, her ladyship ordered the servant to convey the letter to Sir Yep Flankem's.—But not to answer further questions than merely from whom the letter came, if asked, on any account.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT IS HORRIDLY VEXATIOUS, WHEN, HAVING MADE UP OUR MINDS TO THE IMMEDIATE OCCURRENCE OF SOME PARTICULAR EVENT, WHICH WE, OURSELVES HAVE MANŒUVRED TO OBTAIN, WE HAPPEN TO FIND THE VERY REVERSE TAKE PLACE.

WHAT with rallying—what with soothing—and, what with sound advice, Lady Harriett, by the hour of breakfast on the following day, had so far revived the drooping spirits of her lovely friend, that she would sometimes smile at the jests against Sir Yep; but the moments of hilarity were merely evanescent; and gloomy apprehensions would intrude in spite of all

endeavours to the contrary.—At breakfast the papers were brought.

Her ladyship having hurried over the debates, and the foreign intelligence, happening to glance her eye on Eliza, observed an austere flush on her countenance which she had never perceived before: she therefore laid the paper down, and viewed her friend with peculiar attention; who repeatedly cast her eyes back, and then read onwards, as through a few lines only; and, by the motion of her lips, seemed to pronounce every word with peculiar emphasis;—when, assuming a smile of the most ineffable disdain, she exclaimed—"Indeed!"—And perceiving Lady Harriett to be all attention, she proceeded—"These, my amiable friend, "are not times for young women to de-"mean themselves as silly, whining, "pining, girls! 'Tis high time for some

"to assert the dignity of the sex ; and to "convince the world, that, when roused "by jesuitical inventions to a due discri-"mination, they can determine to judge "for themselves. This saucy *coachman* "shall find I am not to be intimidated "into matrimony with such a *yoke-fellow*, "by an invidious paragraph in a news-"paper !"—Then, laying down the paper, she rose from her seat, and paced the room with much agitation.

Lady Harriett, at a loss what to say, on conduct so unusual—so enigmatical! took up the same paper, and instantly perceived the following paragraph.—"We "are authorised to assure our readers, "that, in a very few days, the wealthy "baronet, Sir Yep Flankem, will conduct "to the altar of Hymen, Miss E—a "O'M—a, the beautiful *protege* of Lady "H—— L———, of Grosvenor Square,

" The settlement, which is highly liberal,
" will be ready for execution in three
" days."

" Humph !" cried her ladyship.—" The
" beautiful *protege!*—Well ! There is
" some merit in the printer giving us *three*
" words of truth in his paragraph of ten
" lines. Sir Yep shews himself, not only
" a man of perseverance, but of spirit
" also. He not only continues to *champ*
" *the bit* very kindly himself, but seems
" resolved that you shall take it too.—
" What are we to do in this dilemma, my
" dear ? The wretch is evidently *restive*
" already ; and, I am fearful, we shall
" have more *kicking*—*nestling*—and *toss-*
" *ing up the head.* I wish the Earl and
" Sir William would drop in. We are
" engaged for the play to-night, of course
" they will be early to dine. But, I begin
" to think we had better not go ; for, de-

" pend upon it, this *jehu's* off-wheel para-
" graph will draw the stare of the whole
" house on us."

" This is the first time, I believe, that " I ever differed in opinion with my most " amiable friend," said Eliza—" I feel— " I know that the stare of the whole house " will be on *me*; and therefore, with your " ladyship's permission, I am determined " to endure it. By shutting myself up, as " if ashamed of my conduct, I shall give " those, whose good opinion, I do not " hesitate to say, is life to me, but too " much cause to apprehend that the odious " paragraph may not absolutely be an in- " famous falsehood. As to the stare of the " house, my conscious innocence of such " a *crime*, as yielding to the proposals " of so despicable a *wretch*, will enable " me to support it. And, as to the *man* " himself, if he dare be personally trouble-

"some, I will convince him, that, where "danger is imminent, Nature has providentially enabled me to avenge my own "wrongs."

"Hear! hear! hear! O that we had "all your sex present, my dear Eliza, to "cheer you for so gallant a decision! But "seriously, my love, you have far exceeded my most sanguine expectation; "and I am not a little delighted, I assure "you, to see your good sense soar so preeminently above Sir Yep Flankem's impertinence. With such a resolution you "have nothing to fear, my dear; and, in "fact, the sooner *we* face the little *storm*, "the sooner it will blow over us. Therefore, as more rallying on the subject "might tend to irritate our minds afresh, "it is my opinion that *we* should not "court it, by mentioning the subject at "dinner. Should it happen to come upon

" *us* unsought, as we are assured, that, " from such friends, it can only be meant " to entertain, *we* will endeavour to re- " ceive it with a smile, and beg to pass it " till supper; by which time, I trust, we " shall be able to laugh at it ourselves."— Thus soothed, the one to apparent tranquillity, and the other to active complacency of mind, the lovely friends amused themselves at the piano-forte, till it was time to dress.

At dinner, though it soon appeared that all were equally well acquainted with the insidious paragraph, each seemed to move round and round the delicate subject as if actually fearful of taking it up. At length the earl, by mere accident, in reply to somewhat about news, said—" I " think I need not ask you if you have " seen the curious paragraph in the papers " of to-day, relative to Sir Yep and"—

"O yes!" said Lady Harriett, catching the bird on the wing—"we have already "laughed at it until we have fatigued our-"selves, my lord. So do give us some-"thing fresh."

"Not that we have absolutely exhausted "the subject, my lord," said Eliza, with a kind of half-smile—"and, by supper "time, we may be able to renew our "laughter at it."

"Bravo, Miss O'Mara! 'Tis worth a "good laugh, for the artful dexterity of "the trick. And a good supper will help "to give it a more agreeable zest."

"O no! There will be nothing at all "worth laughing at, my lord. And what "sort of a supper can you expect, at only "a guinea a ticket?" said Sir William; who, at that very instant, had recollected

the advertisement of a *grand masquerade*, on the following Monday, at the King's Theatre.

The laugh against poor Sir William, at such a blunder, kept the party so much exhilerated, that the whole repaired to the theatre in tolerable spirits.

CHAPTER IX.

THERE ARE SOME SO IMMODERATELY FOND OF A CERTAIN DISH, AS SELDOM, OR EVER, TO EXPERIENCE AN INCLINATION FOR TASTING ANY THING ELSE.

KING JOHN was the play; and the curtain rose just as our party were seated; of course the ladies could not pay much immediate attention to the gaze of the audience:—though Eliza could not help perceiving that she was *indulged* with a plentiful portion of it; not only from the boxes near her, but even from those at the opposite side of the house; in one of

which sat *Cato* and *Juba,* with countenances evidently averted: and there they maintained their seats, sometimes whispering each other, without so much as one distant salutation, until the commencement of the forth act! Such conduct from those, who, in fact, had been the principal inducements to her to weather the *storm* of impertinent observation, in consequence of Sir Yep's paragraph, required all the excellence of *Mrs. Siddons*—all the maternal tenderness—the anxious fears—the disappointed ambition—the glow of revenge—and the fever of distraction, so exquisitely pourtrayed in her *Constance!* All the cautious anxiety—the jealous ambition—the evanescent disdain—and superstitious timidity, of *Mr. Kemble's King John.*—All the gallant earnestness—generous freedom—and British intrepidity, of *Falconbridge,* so ably exerted by *Mr. C. Kemble*—to confine her attention to

the scene. Happily, the attraction was irresistible, and the time glided away even faster than Eliza, at some moments, either expected or wished.

At the conclusion of the fourth act, *Cato* was missed from the opposite box, which induced the ladies to take a survey of their own. He was there discovered, placed directly behind Lady Harriett, with his eye so intensely fixed on Eliza, that he could not withdraw it unperceived. He bowed to the ladies; and, as usual, asked how they had been entertained. The question was answered by the ladies with the highest encomiums on the performers; who really seemed to be peculiarly happy in their arduous characters: and Eliza, whose mind was far from the placid and serene, assumed so calm and determined a composure, as, apparently, to encourage conversation, by being evidently

ready to yield her portion to the general stock.

Such an attempt at ease, did not escape the eye of *Cato*; who, probably, sooner than he otherwise might have done, half turning to Lady Harriett, said—" I did " not know, until this morning, that we " were so soon to expect a happy change " in your ladyship's family."

" Nor did we, Sir George," returned Eliza, eagerly seizing the opportunity of replying—" expect any very *early* change " ourselves; till the printers of the morn- " ing papers took it into their heads to " *indulge* us with the wonderful intelli- " gence."

" Wonderful, indeed, Madam! Could " editors dare to insert so positive a para- " graph if not duly authorised?—But,

" possibly, they thought you were diffi-
" cult to please, *ladies,* therefore exerted
" their invention to the utmost bent, and,
" at last, selected a gentleman to whom
" no *possible objection* could be made by
" any lady."—A loud laugh was the consequence.

" Why, really, Sir George," and her ladyship smiled—" I am inclined to believe that *we* are not wholly obliged to
" the *editors* for the paragraph. *We* certainly had very tempting proposals made
" to *us* yesterday by the gallant—*barouche driver*; who, of course, not doubting
" our ready *submission* to so *eloquent* and
" *affecting* a requisition, must have given
" the paragraph to the same messenger
" who brought our letter—determined to
" *kill two birds with one stone!* But as
" my lovely friend did not feel the powers
" of her *pen* adequate to a task—so so-

" lemnly consequential, I am rather fear-
" ful that my answer, though blazoned in
" terms particularly appropriate to the
" capacity of the gentleman, will procure
" *us* a paragraph of a far different tenor."

While Lady Harriett was so speaking, Eliza, on looking towards *Juba,* saw him most attentively observing his friend; and, turning round, perceived *Cato* draw his handkerchief across his face, and then drop it.—" Trifles light as air, are, to the " jealous, confirmations strong as proofs " of holy writ!" says the great English poet. She again turned her eye towards *Juba,* and saw him quitting the box. She instantly penetrated the little mystery, and a glow of satisfaction beamed on her lovely countenance, which, had it appeared on her first entering the theatre, would have conveyed ideas far different from what the *gazers* were induced to

conceive from the determined composure which she then assumed. In fact, she was well assured, that, whatever unfavourable impressions the paragraph might have made, they were already effaced from the mind of the one friend; and would, very soon, be as effectually obliterated from the mind of the other.

The fifth act commencing, all, as usual, became duly attentive; but, attentive as the ladies were, they could not help hearing some words whispered, both by *Cato* and *Juba*, who then entered the box, which, though not sufficiently audible to be distinctly heard, were, no doubt, deemed of importance by the two gentlemen; as, at the conclusion of the play, all became respectfully familiar.

During several scenes of the pantomime (*Asmodeus on Crutches*) which did the

highest credit to the spirit and liberality of the managers; as well as to the talents of the mechanist; two gentlemen who sat on the same seat with *Cato* and *Juba*, were absolutely vociferous in their censorious observations on such "*abominable* "*mummery*," and most "*infernal non-* "*sense*."

"Most of our pantomimes do certainly "consist of mummery and nonsense, gen- "tlemen," observed *Cato*—"but what "would the *gods* and the *children*, nay, "what would the majority of *us*, do, if "we were not sometimes amused with "such entertainments? I grant there is "no great deal of morality or instruction "to be obtained from them; but, if "liberally got up, they generally create "our surprise; and, what is more con- "ducive to our health, incite our laugh- "ter; which, to nervous and saturnine

"people, is an object of no trifling con-
"cern, after sitting out a tragedy, and
"having been repeatedly beguiled of our
"tears by the excellence of the perform-
"ers."

"Humph!" muttered one of the gentlemen—"If Shakspeare's plays were per-
"formed oftener they would prove more
"conducive to our own entertainment,
"and more instructive to our youth too,
"I should apprehend."

"But how are we to play them oftener,
"Sir?" said *Cato*—"You will recollect,
"that the plays of our immortal bard pos-
"sess characters so very arduous, that
"constitutions, young and hale, would
"succumb under them, if frequently per-
"formed. But *Mrs. Siddons* and *Mr.*
"*Kemble*, though still possessing full
"powers, are not young; therefore it

" would be not less imprudent in them to " attempt, than inhuman in us to expect, " such performances more than once, or " twice a week at most, until some rising " actors shall, if possible, start into equal " excellence, and come to their relief. " Of course, if the wit and eloquence of " our modern pieces will not draw re- " spectable houses during the remainder " of the week, I, for my part, cannot see " where our managers are blameable, for " aiding those productions with pantomime " and spectacle."

"Oh! as to *spectacle*," muttered the gentleman, with peculiar emphasis—" we " shall soon have plenty of *that*, I fancy; " for, I understand, they are training " *horses* to cut their *capers* upon the " stage; in order to entertain *us*, I sup- " pose, by rendering the rest of the " performers as ridiculous as they can."

"If our performers, in such spectacles, "take care not to let the *horses* prove the "better *actors*, there will be little fear "of them becoming ridiculous in such "company; and, if we are to be indulged "with spectacle, in a superior style, I "see no impropriety in *horses*, or even "*lions* and *elephants*, being introduced, "if necessary, towards aiding the scene; "could they be readily procured, and "trained for such purposes. It is not by "introducing *horses*, *bears*, or *tygers*, on "the stage with our performers which "will render them ridiculous; but by "actually compelling the low-comedy por-"tion of those gentlemen, in many in-"stances, to transform themselves into "the characters of *asses*!"

Here the burst of applause, on the superb ship-launch, terminated the conversation; and our little party, anxious to

get to their carriage before the company became troublesome, hastily paid their usual respects, and retired; highly gratified, not only with the entertainments of the evening, but with the favourable events also.

CHAPTER X.

HOW FORTUNATE IT IS FOR MANKIND, THAT SUPERIOR CUNNING WILL OFTEN OVERREACH ITSELF!

SURE enough, the prediction of Lady Harriett, as to another paragraph from the *bang-up baronet,* was duly verified on the receipt of the next morning's papers; as the following curious effort of malign cunning, and indirect revenge, appeared in each.—"In consequence of an express, "announcing the dangerous state of a near "relation of Sir Yep Flankem, residing "in the county of Antrim, we are autho-

" rised to say, that the baronet lost not a " moment, but left town *post* for Port- " patrick, early in the evening of yester- " day; consequently the *union* which was " in such a state of forwardness, as to re- " quire only the executing of writings, " must now be posponed *sine die*—most " probably until the expiration of a tedious " family mourning."

There was something so malevolently persecuting in this second effort of deception, that both ladies felt highly indignant, and determined on making reprisals; so resolved to consult the earl and Sir William, as to the propriety of giving the whole a flat contradiction. For what would *Cato* think of such a persevering insult?

The gentlemen had taken a ride to Woolwich, and had made an early dinner

at Shuter's Hill; so did not arrive until the tea-apparatus was introduced. Then the volubility of the ladies, on the egregious misconduct of the *disappointed barouche-driver*, claimed the admiration even of gentlemen so intimate: and, after expatiating, and re-expatiating, on the enormity of his insolence, and the indispensable necessity of flatly contradicting the *provoking* paragraphs, as the gentlemen had not perused the papers of the day, one was handed to each; with a black line drawn round the obnoxious paragraph, in order to catch immediate attention.

"Hey!" cried Sir William, after heedfully perusing the matter of obloquy—"Poor Sir Yep! Why, he wont live long, "ladies! For, by this paragraph, he must "be half way to Port-patrick; while I, "this very day, between eleven and twelve

"o'clock saw his *presentment-apparition*
"standing at his chamber-window, be-
"holding a battle between two dogs in the
"street!"

The ladies did not hesitate a moment to declare that Sir William could not have seen Sir Yep Flankem himself; because, as far as Sir Yep Flankem, himself, was immediately concerned, the paragraph was *official* intelligence to the contrary. And, of course, *he* must have gone for Portpatrick; and Sir William must, in an absent moment, have seen one of the servants stand at the window; and, being the *monster's* room, mistook the *man* for the *master!* consequently, Sir William was compelled to stand a laugh: and the idea of seeing the *presentment-apparition* was scouted—*nem. con.*

The interval between tea-time and sup-

per was occupied, sometimes in philippics on the outrageous conduct of the *barouche-driver,* as the ladies termed Sir Yep, and in attempts of each to excel the other in something peculiarly witty and severe for the papers; as an antidote to the poisionous qualities of Sir Yep's paragraphs. At length, a few minutes before supper, each agreed to submit the precious *morceau* to the approving vote of the company, as most appropriate to the object in view.

On perusing the *manuscripts,* it was observed that Lady Harriett had suffered symphathetic spleen so far to predominate, as to induce her to adopt absolute invective.—The earl had kept his eye so steadily on the possibility of procuring parliamentary influence, that his effort was deemed a mere mixture of *milk and water,* and, as such, voted inadmissible.—Sir William was allowed to have begun very prettily,

but an unfortunate jump from the subject immediately before him, to a flat contradiction of his own dog-battle in the street, gained *him* a screech of laughter, and his labour a *black-ball*. Eliza's was not an actual paragraph, but a firm, yet moderate, note, to the editor, flatly denying the most distant pretext for such paragraphs—as far as she was concerned; and very seriously demanding a positive contradiction of each. After due deliberation, and some little reluctance in each to relinquish the self-made document, it was unanimously agreed, that Eliza's note should be dispatched the next morning, in order to insure a certain insertion of an apology from the editors on the following day:—when, after enjoying a merry supper, and many a hearty laugh, the ladies, attempting to anticipate what the editors would say; and the gentlemen attempting to anticipate what the baronet would

swear; the party separated until the day on which the paragraphs were expected to appear: as, on the morrow, all the male-fashionables of the British world were compelled to hurry thirty miles out of town, in order to enjoy the heart-felt satisfaction of beholding two of their fellow-creatures, fellow-men, beat each other till unable to stand!

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT IS THE CRIME OF TREASON AGAINST A SOVEREIGN, TO SCEPTICISM AGAINST THE INFALLIBILITY OF A FASHIONABLE OPERA-SINGER!

ON the important morning our lovely *inseparables* had their breakfasts rendered doubly grateful to them, by observing in the papers the so anxiously expected apologies. As they were nearly similar, we will not trouble our readers with more than one of them, which was as follows—

"Equally sorry to have become the

"dupe of a mere hoax, as ready to make
"all possible amends, on discovering our
"error, we take the earliest opportunity
"of contradicting the paragraphs which
"appeared in this paper, relative to an
"approaching *union* between Sir Yep
"Flankem and Miss E. O'M—. Having
"unquestionable authority to assure our
"readers, that there was not the slightest
"pretext for such fabrications."

The amiable pair felt perfectly satisfied that such apology must not only frustrate all Sir Yep's insiduous machinations; but might, possibly, yield some degree of satisfaction to their theatrical friends; especially, as from their distant conduct at the theatre, during the earlier part of the evening, it was evident that they had seen the former scurrilous paragraph in a light not less serious than flattering to the bosom of Eliza, and soothing to the

friendly hopes of her most amiable friend. They longed for the arrival of the Earl and Sir William ; but, as the evening was devoted to the opera, they could not expect to see them till dinner-time. However, what with looking over some new music, and what with making an unfashionable visit to a distressed fatherless family, in the vicinity of Brompton, the hours fled tolerably swiftly ; and they were at last caught in the middle of an hysteric laugh, at the ludicrous posture which her ladyship had just depicted for Sir Yep, on his first perusal of the horrible *coup de grace* to all his schemes.

The laugh appeared of too much consequence to the gentlemen, for them to suffer it to subside without inquiring into the cause of it: and her ladyship having, with her accustomed facetiousnes, retraced the figure, it was loudly repeated

by the gentlemen; with an observation from the earl, that Sir Yep need not wish for a rapid recovery, or a speedy dissolution of his relation, as he certainly would not be able, very soon, to muster a sufficient degree of effrontery to support the witty *whippings* of the *four-in-hand club.*

The principal object of the visit of the ladies to the *opera* being purely to hear Madame ——— to every possible advantage, by singing in her own element; and in a piece written purposely for a first appearance in the season, they determined to be there before the conclusion of the overture. And, as going to the box of a friend would totally preclude the possibility of conversing with *Cato* or *Juba,* should they happen to be in the house, so they resolved to go, as a gossiping party, into the pit. But forgetting that the opera commenced much earlier on the

Saturday evenings, from the necessity of concluding the *ballet* at twelve o'clock, our party did not actually enter until the first scene was nearly over. They saw but few in the pit; nor did their theatrical friends constitute a part of that few. They therefore took their seats, not quite so well pleased as they might have been, had the audience been more numerous by *two*: and Lady Harriett seated herself by a very smart-looking young man, who, being remarkably attentive, and having no book, was judged to possess a competent knowledge of the Italian language; though evidently not a foreigner.

During the whole of the first act the young gentleman did not speak a syllable; and though intensely attentive, gave no symptoms either of applause or displeasure. At the end of the first act, the little party

was joined by *Juba*, who expressed much satisfaction at so unexpected a meeting; consequently, in such company, the dance soon passed away. The young gentleman returned to his seat just as the second act was commencing, and ventured actually to make a silent *bow* to the ladies; at the same time that he conveyed to their olfactory nerves, a very strong effluvia of *Coniac brandy!* Such an observation, and such taciturnity, drew the *private* attention of our party chiefly towards him.

Thus glided on the second act to our party, until the two principal *buffoes* of the strange *farrago* crawled about the stage on their knees. Conduct so truly laughable, and the bumper of brandy, which he had, no doubt, taken between the acts, broke the charm by which the gentleman had been spell-bound; and, after a roar of

laughter, he familiarly asked Lady Harriett, what the fellows crawled about the stage so for?

"It is necessary to the scene, I pre-"sume, Sir," said her ladyship, very good-naturedly—"Besides, you will re-"collect, they are in the presence of the "grand sultan!"

"Egod! and so they be, Madam; and "before his wives too. And they say that "he *ha* gotten ever so many of *em*. Lord "help him! If he lived at Leeds he'd find "one quite enough. And *she* that be "sent away in fetters is a dashing one "too! Not but *she* sings *pratty* enough; "and *runs*, and *slides*, and *flourishes*, "and *jumps*, up and down the *scale* mon-"strously cleverly—if she didn't make "quite so much noise, and wasn't quite "so *fat* and *fuzzy* towards the bottom of

" her voice. What a *blaze* o' them dia-
" monds she *ha* gotten upon her head:
" but I suppose they wont let her take *em*
" away with her! For *we* should never get
" enough money to pay for all of *em*, I
" be sure, though we do *dress* cloth for a
" *pratty* many o' the first houses in Lon-
" don; much less she who does nothing
" but *sing*, and *squall*, and *dash* about
" so! That there lady, with the fine,
" clear, full, voice, and *pratty* face, that
" do sing second now and then, has n't
" gotten half so many diamonds about her
" head; and as she be the better singer of
" the two, she ought to *ha* the most;
" especially, as the *people* here do seem
" to applaud those the most that be dressed
" the finest. But, all this time, Madam,
" we have n't had one single song from
" your mortal great singer. Pray when
" do she come on? For I *ha* borrowed
" this *hat* and things o' my cousin for the

"sake o' getting into the pit, that I might "plainly hear all she do charm the folks with "before I go home again. And I should be "mortal sorry if she were to be taken poorly, "and disappoint me; as I must go on "Monday, 'cause I *ha* taken a place."

Lady Harriett's eyes had frequently required the aid of a handkerchief; so much did her ladyship endure to avoid laughing aloud. With much difficulty, however, she did command herself sufficiently to say—"You have already heard "our famous singer, Sir. That was the "person whose diamonds you so much "admired."

"She! That! That the great singer! "No, no, Madam! I didn't come so far "North to know no better than that, "neither!—What! The *diamond-mer-* "*chant* the great singer!—Lord, Madam!

"Why, I *ha* been at school all my life-
"time almost, and do understand music
"*pratty* well, so do ought to know a little
"better than that too! But mayhap you
"thought me a little troublesome, and
"said so in hope of getting rid of me.—
"So I wish you good-night, Madam."—
And the young gentleman positively left the house immediately; without waiting to hear the great lady sing again.

As soon as the opera was over, *Juba* said—"I hope, ladies, you have recovered
"from the shagrin which the abrupt de-
"parture of your *beau* must naturally have
"created."

The only answer which either lady could make, for some time, was a peal of laughter, loudly echoed by several ladies and gentlemen, who had sat near them, and could not help hearing what the young

gentleman said. Soon, however, Eliza was able to observe—" It was rather for-" tunate for both author and singers, that " the young gentleman quitted the theatre " so abruptly ; or his criticisms, no doubt, " as curious as uncommon, might have " convicted many of us of most egregious " mistakes which we have long laboured " under: especially as there would have " been little danger of partiality from " him."

" And thus, ladies, will it ever be with " strangers," said *Juba*.—" Taught by " the *puffs* of adulatory friends, or venal " hirelings, to fancy performers possessed " of greater merit than excellence itself " can ever attain to, they come prepared " for something beyond the compass of " mortal ability ; and being, from their " ignorance of the language, incapable of " tasting what may be deemed real beau-

" ties, by the politer part of the audience, " their ears on the alert, in expectation of " being gratified to satiety, catch at little " imperfections which might have escaped " the scrutiny of nicer observers: so, con- " fident that the *piece* is not wholly per- " fect, from the little *flaws* which they " have already discoverved, their disap- " pointed ideas take rapid counter-strides, " and, from being more than mortal, they " soon rate their *idols* as scarcely above " mediocrity!—*Gods* and *goddesses* must " make their fortunes speedily; for, if " once the spell happen to be broken, in- " difference will very soon succeed to " idolatry."

During the first act of the grand *ballet*, the ladies were tolerably attentive. It then occurring to her ladyship, that *Cato* had not yet appeared, she ventured to hope he was well.

"In tolerable health, I thank your "ladyship," *Juba* replied—"At least, he "was so, when he, yesterday, left town; "for, like *gallants of yore*, he is wander- "ing through the world in search of "*beauty*, to rescue from the fangs of "distress, and place in affluence and "ease."

"Upon my word!" cried Lady Harriett, a little surprised at *Juba's* confession: and observing Eliza to be similarly situated, "I "thought that gentlemen, at Sir George's "time of life, generally resigned such "labouring-oar to younger hands."

"We are told, my lady, that perfect "happiness is not even to be expected in "this sublunary world. At all events, I "am sorry to know that Sir George has "not been the happy man to find it. The "fact is, he has long been looking for a

"lady, a near relation, who has, hitherto, "eluded his search—and, happening to "receive intelligence from Devonshire, "which seemed to flatter his expectations, "he left town early yesterday morning, "in hope of finding a long lost trea-"sure."

"May Providence direct the lady to "him! For the protection of such a friend "cannot but be conducive to her happi-"ness, I am very confident."—And Eliza felt affected.

"Hey, ladies!" cried Sir William, looking at his watch—"Beware of ex-"communication! The Horse-Guards has "just struck twelve.—How came they to "be so late to night?"

"Then, I protest, the *ballet* shall no "longer detain me on unhallowed ground!"

And her ladyship smiled.—" So what " think you of starting, good folks?"

His lordship answered by giving Eliza his hand. And our little party, wishing *Juba* favourable intelligence from his friend, hastened to the carriage.

" I wonder what sort of critique on the " *Three Sultanas* the young gentleman " would have given to the town, had he " waited its conclusion!" said Eliza, as they rode home.

" I wonder what sort of a critique the " editors will give!" said Lady Harriett.

" Give!" cried the earl—" That it is a " *hodge-podge* of abominable trash!—Got " up merely to set off the grand *Sultana* " to the best advantage—to be sure!"

" What think you, on so serious a " subject, Sir William ?" said her ladyship, laughing.

Sir William, who not only heard the question distinctly, but was actually thinking on the very subject, readily replied— " Oh! Let the editors only say, that the " principal character had as many jewels " on her head as would feed all the poor in " the metropolis for three months; and " the idea of her grandeur will be sure to " stamp the *piece* with ample celebrity, " were it ten times worse than it is.—Ha! " at home already!"

CHAPTER XII.

AMBIGUOUS WARNINGS DO AS FREQUENTLY TEND TO LEAD THE THREATENED ASTRAY, AS TO YIELD THEM A FAVOURABLE OPPORTUNITY OF ELUDING IMPENDING DANGER.

ON the third morning after their visit to see the jumble of inconsistent trifles in the opera *Le Tre Sultane,* while the ladies were indulging in anticipation of the presence of *Cato,* at the theatre, on the following evening; (having just sent a servant to take places for *The Peasant Boy* and the *Bee-Hive);* and indulging in rather curious suggestions, as to the *lady*

whom the old gentleman was in search of; but which did not, by any means, tend to increase the pleasure of Eliza, or the satisfaction of her friend, a letter was delivered by the servant, who said it came by the two-penny post. The seal was, evidently, the impression of the top of a thimble.—The hand-writing was barely legible, yet tolerably well spelt, and, apparently, that of a female.—Lady Harriett, who had taken it from the servant, turned it every way—looked at the seal; and began to count the number of *dots* in it; when, slipping from her fingers, she picked it up, and saw it addressed to—
"Miss O'Mara, at Lady Loveplumb's, in
"Grosvenor Square."—Then wondering who could have sent such a letter to her lovely friend, she handed it to Eliza, saying—"This does not look like a love-
"letter."

Eliza looked at the *seal*, and began to count the *dots* too; then looking at her ladyship, and sighing, said—" There certainly " is not any similitude between this inani- " mate *letter* and a *cat!* Yet has it re- " minded me of my last night's dream ; " and I cannot summon up sufficient " courage to open it."

Lady Harriett rallied her friend very freely, as well on being affected by a dream, as on the letter reminding her of a *cat* in particular, and not of an *elephant*, or some other noble animal. She then held out her hand, and receiving the letter, was going to open it ; but, recollecting herself, said—" That we may be per- " fectly methodical, my love, in this " momentous affair, suppose *we* hear this " *cat-revived dream* related, with all due " solemnity, before *we* presume to force

" the *barricado* of this sempstress' most " awful and eloquent budget of secrets?"

" Psha! my dear Lady Harriett! You " are so very severe, that, I declare, I " don't know what to say to you. I am " as well convinced as you can be, that it " is truly ridiculous, if not absolutely cri- " minal, to become the dupe of dreams. " Yet, there may be some, I hope your " ladyship will allow, which may make " so forcible an impression on the mind, " as to claim a small portion of respect, at " least, if not an implicit reliance. And, " after all, mine, though very sharp, " might have been occasioned by some " noisy *cats* in the garden; for, by such, " I was actually awoke out of my uneasy " slumber at last.—But to the dream it- " self.—Know then, my dear lady, I " dreamt that I was shut up in a close

" room, with a *cat* which appeared to be
" exceedingly vicious, by the contour of
" its countenance, yet was really very
" quiet, as to me. Intimidated by its
" looks, I thought I kept very close in
" one corner of the room, as far distant
" from it as possible; when I was soon
" most dreadfully affrighted by the howl-
" ing of a tremendous *wolf*; which, though
" not positively in the room, appeared
" visible to me through the wall at the
" farther end of it! I shrieked!—The *cat*
" growled, and put itself in a threatening
" attitude at the noisy monster:—then,
" coming up to me, it said, perfectly in-
" telligibly—' I can't stay to defend you;
" yet I would if I could, for all you seem
" so much afraid of me. However, I will
" lend you my *weapons*; and, if you are
" not afraid to make use of them, they
" will enable you to overcome the *wolf*.'—
" Then, pulling its *talons* from its fore-

" feet, the poor creature gave them to " me, and vanished from my sight with " an explosion as loud as the report of a " gun!"

Lady Harriett sighed at the recital of Eliza's dream.—" And so you were left " with the *talons* of the poor *cat* to pro- " tect yourself from the fangs of an enor- " mous *wolf!* God help you, my dear, " if, really in such a situation, you had " no better weapons of defence!—De- " pend on it, the noisy cats in the garden " disturbed your repose; and it was na- " tural for your dozing-ideas to revert to " the immediate cause of such disturb- " ance.—So, now for the letter"—And, breaking the seal, her ladyship read loudly as follows—

" Dear Miss, I am a poor body, and be " stung to the soul. My hands be tied,

" tied, but my tongue is'nt; so I am de-
" termined to put you upon your *gard*, by
" sending this letter. As sure as ever my
" sister Alice was *ruinated* by that there
" *villain*, there is a plot hatching against
" you, Miss; and if you don't get hold of
" this letter, they'll get hold of you; and
" you'll tumble into the *trap* as sure as
" you be living. So, for God sake! take
" care of yourself. Keep upon the watch
" by night and by day; and don't be *trapt*
" as poor Alice was. That there devil—
" O lord, Miss! they are upon the stairs;
" so I must finish my letter as fast as ever
" I can; and slip to the two-penny post-
" office with it myself, while my name's
" Mary."

" So much for the epistle of Mary, my
" love!—for that is all of it.—No name—
" no date!—Nothing else!—'Tis very
" astonishing! Somewhat like the myste-

"rious allusions of the *sybils.*—A flash of
"refulgent light, to render our darkness
"more visible! I can hardly think the
"writer in her senses. Whom should
"you apprehend personal danger from?—
"*Squibs* and *paragraphs* we certainly
"might have had fired at us, if Sir Yep
"had remained in town; but it is rather
"unlikely that he should have reached
"the end of his journey yet; or that our
"paragraphs should yet have met his eye.
"So, at all events, we can have nothing
"disagreeable to apprehend from him, for
"ten days, at least. And even then,
"should he feel so inclined, we shall have
"no trifling advantage over him, by being
"on the spot; and ever ready to counter-
"act all his *squibs* and *crackers* by the
"papers of the following day."

"I most sincerely wish we had never
"seen or heard of him!" said Eliza.—"For

"the language of his challenge to the "Marquis of Montresor, evinces him to "be both ignorant and malicious. Shall "we consult the Earl and Sir William on "the subject of this letter, when they "come to dine here to-morrow?"

"Why, really, my dear, I cannot say "that I see any necessity for it; as it "might only induce them to rally *us* on "the fertility of our apprehensions. At "all events we may as well wait a few "days, to see if this person, whoever it "be, will have any thing further to com-"municate. In that case, indeed, it may "be prudent, candidly to lay what we "already have received, and what may "then be received, before them; and "come to some serious resolution on the "subject.

Though both ladies readily coincided

in opinion that there could be nothing disagreeable to apprehend—for ten days, at least; yet they were far from being easy. If there were any thing serious to be apprehensive of, as the letter of Mary most emphatically asserted, whom should they fear? The *Jehu-baronet* was five hundred miles distant; and as few *arms*, except those of the *law*, could reach so far, they certainly could not have any thing to fear from him, but news-paper *pop-guns*, while he remained in Ireland. To whom else, then, could they turn a suspicious eye? No other person had made any pretensions, therefore no other could *chew the cud* of disappointment. For, to suppose the Marquis of Montresor capable of entertaining illiberal designs, would not only be the very acme of folly, but of presumption also. Still they were uneasy, both awake and asleep; and, while at breakfast, on the following morning, held a very

serious conversation, whether they should go to the theatre in the evening, or complain of a violect *head-ache*, as a decent apology for staying at home. Much and many cogent arguments were ably supported by each, and determination hung long in suspense, until an idea, that possibly the lady—the *long-lost treasure*, might be there with *Cato*—and with *Juba*, abruptly protruding itself, made apprehension kick the beam; and gave a kind of splenetic temerity to our *inseparables*, which threw all other cares afar behind them.

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE IS NO GUARDING AGAINST DETERMINED VIOLENCE, IF DULY ACCOMPANIED BY SECRET MANŒUVRES, AND WELL-ADAPTED STRATAGEMS.

ARRIVING at the theatre, our little party saw their *theatrical friends* alight from the carriage immediately before them, and gaze about as if to see who was coming next; consequently, after the usual compliments, they all entered the box together: and the ladies were by no means displeased at not perceiving the *long-lost treasure* in the company of those gentle-

men; how much soever their curiosity might be on the alert to learn who the lady could be that had been looked for so long in vain.

The overture had ceased before the party were seated; therefore, attention held them mute. But as ladies on the tenter-hooks of curiosity would rather swallow *camels*, than strain at *knats*, it will not appear surprising, that the interval between the first and second acts, should have been devoted to *angling* for the pretty *fish* which they longed so very much to be in possession of. They threw the *hook* twice towards *Juba*—but not so much as a single *nibble!* They then cast the *bait* at *Cato*—with as little success! At length, as desperate situations justify desperate exertions, Lady Harriett volunteered the forlorn-hope, by saying—" I " hope, Sir George, you proved success-

"ful in your little cruize to the West, "since we had the pleasure last to see "you?"

Cato sighed.—And, even after a visible effort to compose himself, could only return —"I am sorry to say, my lady, I was not." Then cast a look of disappointment at *Juba*, which being evidently perceived by the ladies, silenced all further attempts at discovery on that head; and though several very audible *hems* were thrown out, after the conclusion of the second act, not a word was spoken; except by the Earl and Sir William, who exchanged several sentences, relative to the gratification which authors must enjoy, on seeing their pieces got up with high liberality and attention; and the characters disposed of among the best performers. At the end of the piece, however, *Cato* did, with tolerable spirit, ask the ladies how they

had been entertained? To which he was not only answered, *very well*, but asked, in return, how he liked *The Peasant Boy*?

"I think, ladies, that the author has "grievously outraged the *probabilities*; "but made us some amends by his inci-"dents and dialogue. The music, in "general, is pretty—some of it peculiarly "so: and the humble deprecation of "severity of criticism, commands our "mercy, though it cannot elevate our "opinion. Nor is the author a little "obliged to such a phalanx of excellent "performers. *Mr. Phillips* and *Mr.* "*Lovegrove* are towers of strength to him. "And with the pretty *Kelly*, in the front, "the lovely *Mountain* on the one side, and "the charming *Duncan* on the other, the "*critic* who had dared to thrust his nose,

" in enmity, between them, would have
" deserved to have lost it."

Between the acts of the *Bee-Hive*, little more than *sighs* were exchanged; for all the party seemed to droop in spirit, much contrasted with the scenes before them: but, just before its conclusion, *Cato*, forcing a smile, said—" This little
" *piece* reminds me of the effects of emer-
" gency which sometimes occur in our
" *dock-yards*, when it is deemed necessary
" to give a ship a speedy and thorough re-
" pair. If there should happen to be a
" scarcity of well-seasoned timber, some
" defective parts of the frame, are *per*
" *force*, renewed with foreign *stuff*;
" which, when carefully planked, sheath-
" ed, and so forth, may give it an ele-
" gant and formidable appearance, and
" enable it to maintain a few cruises with

" *eclat*; but, in a short time, frequent
" complaints of a *leaky-ship*, betray the
" imperfection of the repairing-materials,
" and soon consign the vessel to an in-
" active *ordinary*. So here we find the
" author, determining to give a thorough
" repair to the good old farce—*The Deuce*
" *is in him*; and substituting foreign ma-
" terials in place of good, strong, heart-
" of-oak. The shape of the *frame* is pre-
" served, I allow, but with very little al-
" teration; and, through the laudable at-
" tention of the *theatrical commissioners*,
" in minutely inspecting the *planking*,
" *sheathing*, *painting*, *rigging*, and *man-*
" *ning* the *vessel* with an able *crew*, and
" gallant *officers*, the little *frigate* looks
" nearly as well as ever it did; and may
" make a few prosperous voyages: still I
" am afraid that the foreign *sap* will com-
" municate its baleful effects to the sounder
" *timbers*, and destine this little *ship* to

"an early ordinary. That the farce still "possesses merit is most certain; and it "would be strange, indeed, if the sweet "and interesting singing of *Mrs. Mountain*—the prominent comicality of *Mr. Lovegrove*—the sterling merit of *Mr. Wrench*—and the *lots* of nonsense, "which, as usual, *Mr. Matthews* so "adroitly *twists, strains,* and *labours,* to "convert into *wit* and *humour,* would not "give success to almost any kind of *after-piece.*"

As the house was thinning apace when *Cato* ceased, he apologized to the ladies, for having detained them so long, to listen to his nonsense; and wishing the party good evening, he and *Juba* hurried away. The little party followed; but were so much incommoded by the sudden accumulation of company, as, more than once, to express their astonishment. Soon, how-

ever, they were suffered to reach the lobby, and pass quietly to the broad passage; but, before the carriage could approach, a violent affray took place, and neither the Earl nor Sir William, escaped blows; as the assailants were numerous and the tumult general. After enduring such situation nearly ten minutes, the constables, aided by the guard, contrived to disperse the mob; when, to the infinite surprise of the rest, Eliza was missing! All possible inquiry was instantly made, but without the desired effect. At length, concluding that, finding herself separated from her friends, she had made the best of her way home in a hackney-coach, they got into the carriage and pursued her: Lady Harriett communicating the circumstance of the anonymous letter as they proceeded; and expressing very serious apprehensions that they should find

the alarming predictions but too truly verified.

"O no! no!" were the replies of both gentlemen; with the following observation by the baronet.—"As it is universally "known that your ladyship and my lord "have taken the estimable girl under your "protection; and that her conduct has "ever been most conspicuously amiable; "who, in our polite circles, or, indeed, "who else in the kingdom, would dare to "practice violent measures against her?"

Soon arriving in Grosvenor Square, they eagerly inquired if Miss O'Mara was come; but she had not either been seen or heard of.—What was to be done? The gentlemen hinted at waiting patiently for a few minutes. Lady Harriett felt every second an hour; so that patience for minutes was

impossible. Somewhat must be done instantly; or she was confident she would expire. It was, therefore, concluded that her ladyship should alight; and that the gentlemen should take the carriage back to the theatre, and make further inquiry after the lost *angel*.

On returning to the *Lyceum*, the guard was just marching away, and the doors were closing. The most earnest inquiries were made of the soldiers, as well as of the people at the doors—but no tidings of their lovely friend! Two *link-boys* came up just as they were concluding their inquiries of the door-keepers. Similar questions were instantly put to them; when one of them pertly replied, that he had *seed* a very *pretty, showy girl*, handed into a coach by *four men*, while the *row* was *keeping up*; and they *gived* it to her *pretty smartly* for running away from her

father, who was raving distracted about her!—That she squalled once *amost* as loud as *Madame Squallini;* but she was soon as quiet as a *biddy;* and the coach drove off at a handsome canter.

This was intelligence of too much consequence to be lost, though of a nature not a little alarming, if, instead of a run-away daughter, the person handed so abruptly into the strange carriage should actually have been Eliza! And the run-away story merely trumpt up to cover the desperate act of assault. Having obtained all the intelligence they could from the boy, the gentlemen gave him half-a-crown; and, fancying her ladyship might be desirous of repeating some of their questions, desired him to call at Grosvenor Square on the following day; and to be sure to be there precisely at twelve o'clock.

Such an affair, though but confusedly surmised, made so violent an impression on the mind of the *baronet*, that the very idea of *absence* was out of the question. He felt convinced there had been *foul play;* and complimented the earl, by observing, that, be the perpetrator of such conduct whom he might, his lordship, beyond a doubt, would call out the villian the moment he was discovered; and entreated, with much warmth, that he might have the honour to be his lordship's *second.*

The earl, who not only did not feel quite so much of the *Hotspur* about him, though really vexed, but had still an eye to influence, replied—" O yes! Most cer-" tainly, Sir William—unless the person " should possess so much influence as to " render it requisite to temporize a little. " In that case, you know, Sir William"—

"Temporize, my lord!—What! Temporize with such a scoundrel! A wretch who has so meanly—so cowardly—so despicably, trepanned the amiable friend of your amiable sister! But I beg pardon, my lord! for not seeing the laughable predicament you were drawing me into, by your well-counterfeited coolness. In fact, as her ladyship must feel this insult the most poignantly, it is my duty to call him out first; and I solemnly swear so to do, in twelve hours after I discover him!—unless he shall previously have married the lady by her consent; or been duly punished by free somebody else."

Though the earl still retained weighty reasons for curbing his choler until he knew the man he should have to deal with, he was too shrewed a politician to think of stemming the torrent of Sir William's

anger while flowing so rapidly. Therefore contented himself with saying—" 'Tis
" a cursed affair, to be sure, my dear
" friend ; but, possibly, to-morrow's sun
" may throw a light on the subject that
" may lead us to a clear developement of
" a circumstance, which, at present, is
" certainly very mysterious ; for, I think
" I heard one of the servants say, this
" moment, that Miss O'Mara is not come
" home."—The carriage stopped; and, on asking the question, it appeared that his lordship had heard but too plainly.

On the entrance of the gentlemen without Eliza, Lady Harriett burst into tears; and exclaimed—" My God ! That we had
" but paid more attention to the anony-
" mous letter !—Why do people attempt
" to put others on their guard against ap-
" proaching danger, yet, in language so
" mysterious as to divest us of all reason-

" able conjecture as to the source whence, " or period when, such danger may be " expected! But tears and bewailings will " now aid us nothing. All our hopes of " rescuing the poor, dear, amiable, crea- " ture, must depend on exertion, instead " of bewailing; though, searching in the " dark, without a *clue*, will answer little " purpose." Therefore, after some conversation, they concluded to wait, as patiently as possible, until the arrival of the *link-boy*; when, possibly, some questions might be put to him, as to the colour of the carriage, the livery, and the horses, which might lead to a discovery of the prime instrument of such an execrable machination.—The sad diminished party, then, in mournful mood, sat down to supper.

Lady Harriett took a small crust of bread, and could eat only one morsel. Sir

William could, with difficulty, pick the wing of a partridge: but his lordship did make shift to eat the two wings and breast of a bird; also about half of a fine lobster, and a plate of apple-pye. After taking half a dozen glasses of Madeira, the gentlemen withdrew, promising to be with her ladyship by twelve o'clock the next day, in order to assist in examining the *link-boy*.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT FUNDS OF INTELLECT WANDER THROUGH THE STREETS UNNOTICED AND UNKNOWN.

AFTER a night of agony of mind, which those only who love an amiable friend as Lady Harriett did, can experience, her ladyship rose about eleven o'clock, that she might be ready to receive the gentlemen on their arrival; not doubting but they would be punctual on such an occasion; and had just taken a cup of coffee when the *link-boy* was announced, and duly introduced. The boy

had as keen an eye to business as the earl himself; and expecting another half-crown for his trouble, was anxious to get possession of it as soon as he could; so had run to Grosvenor Square full half an hour before his time.

"Now, my good boy!" said her ladyship, as soon as she had ordered the lad to take a seat—"recollect yourself. Speak "the exact truth, and I will reward you "for your information. The gentlemen "who spoke to you last night, informed "me that you had given them some intel-"ligence on the important subject of their "search; but they forgot to ask you some "material questions. Did you see the "face of the lady who was forced into the "coach?"

"Why, *an* please you, my lady, I do "think as how I did; and it was a very

" pretty *kind* of face, with light-coloured
" hair. But I wont take upon me to
" swear it—as a *plumper*; because, do you
" see, *an* please your ladyship, I didn't
" see her at all till she squalled most con-
" foundedly loud: and then, by the time
" I could twist my *noddle* about, why,
" they had got her half way into the
" coach; when she was *snug*, and as mute
" as a *mackarel*. But I do think as how
" I could swear—*by Gee!* to a mortal
" handsome light head of hair."

" Sit down, my good boy, while you
" are speaking to me; but don't make use
" of that very naughty term any more:—
" for, though *by Gee* may not actually be
" swearing, it approaches very closely to
" to it; and is immoral as well as irreli-
" gious."

" So the parson said at the charity ser-

" mon, t'other night, *an* please you, my
" lady: but then my old mother, who is
" up to a thing or two, in the *chapel-rig*,
" says as how the more *wickeder* young
" folks be, the more *happier* they'll be in
" t'other country, when they make mat-
" ters up for the latter day, and repent
" heartily. And, by—by—nothing at all
" *an* please your ladyship, your ladyship
" must allow that, in these hard times,
" for poor *link-boys*, 'tis enough to make
" *em* swear a little; though I always tries
" to cheat the *old one* out of a *plumper*, as
" often as I can; 'cause I likes to plague
" him a little."

" Is it possible, child, that your mother
" can know any thing of religion, yet
" dare to give such abominable advice to
" her own offspring?"

" O yes! *an* please you, my lady, she's

" *bang up to the mark!* She goes to the *rum*
" little chapel in a sly corner of St. Giles's,
" where all the *swells* and *blowings* from
" the Tabernacle come to hear *old Snuffle*,
" the *shoe-maker*, hold forth of a Sunday
" night. For the matter o' that, she had some
" notion of taking to the *tub-trade* her
" own self, as she's devilish clever in the
" *cant-slang*; only they told her she was
" of the wrong *sort* for getting a licence,
" to qualify her for dealing out the *squint-*
" *ing-patter*."

Such florid examples of the luminous young *gentleman's* loquacity and eloquence, convinced Lady Harriett that she had—caught a *Tartar*. So, well assured that a lecture on *ethics* would, at the present instant, be thrown away, she resolved to recommend the boy to the attention of the Earl and Sir William: and, turning to the subject next her heart, she said—

"Do you recollect the colour of the "*coach*, *horses*, and *liveries*?"

"*An* please you, my lady, the coach "was yellow or brown, I don't know "which, for a certainty: and the horses "were *bay*, or else *black*; but *dang* me "if I'll swear about it. But the liveries "*was* all blue great coats—that I'll stand "by, any way."

As her ladyship despaired of gaining any further information, until the arrival of the gentlemen, out of mere curiosity she asked the boy how old he was?

"I don't exactly know, *an* please you, "my lady. Mother *swears* as how I'm "only *twelve*; but I *thinks* I must be a "little older, for certain; because, you "see I've got a clear *memorandum* of a "*pelter* in a *whirligig*—of as tight a lad

"as ever shewed a *blazer* to the *ten toes* of
"a lady; and that was seven *year* ago
"this very day; and I was *prigged* while
"*nimming* a gent—but that's all *buz, an*
"please you, my lady: wherefore I thinks
"I must be older than *twelve;* because I
"cou'dn't *ha* been *bang up to the mark* at
"*five,* you know: though every body said
"I was a forward *chick,* for the matter o'
"that."

The entrance of the gentlemen prevented an immediate expostulation on the boy's *demi*-kind of confession: at the same time that their anxiety for news banished some very disagreeable ideas respecting him from her ladyship's memory.

Having taking their seats, the gentlemen looked very attentively at the lad, who had made himself decent to pay his visit, so was not immediately recollected.

"This is the little boy whom you spoke "to last night," said Lady Harriett—"but "he can give me no positive intelligence "as to the lady who was forced into the "carriage; or as to the colour of either "coach or horses; only that the men "wore blue great coats. Nor have I "heard a syllable from the poor, dear, "unfortunate, angel."

"O, no! that is impossible," cried Sir William—"as she is in too much haste "to reach the end of her journey, to "think of losing time by writing to old "friends."—Then pulling the paper from his pocket, which he had received while quitting his house, the very first paragraph that met her ladyship's eye, ran as follows—"Last evening, after a counter-"feit battle at the entrance of the *Lyceum*, "during which the amorous pair effected "their happy escape, a celebrated young

" nobleman carried off, in a post-chaise
" and four, for the land of matrimony
" north of the Tweed, the lovely Miss
" O'M—, of G—— Sq—. A lady whose
" fortune is universally allowed to be the
" least estimable qualification in her pos-
" session."

The earl sighed; and muttered some-what about complete deception.

" I would have laid the *long-odds* a
" hundred times over," said Sir William—
" that it was not in the scope of possibility
" for Miss O'Mara to have acted so illi-
" berally, or so clandestinely, had we
" not chapter and verse to convince us!"

" Good God! Is it possible, Sir Wil-
" liam! Are you—can you be convinced
" that the vile—the execrable, paragraph
" before us, conveys authentic intelli-
" gence?"

"Hey! How!—Don't you think so, "my lady?—What say you, my lord?"

"Egad! I begin to have some doubts "myself, Sir William; though I was ex- "ceedingly angry when I first saw the "paragraph; as, if true, the nobleman's "influence might have been of some con- "sequence. And I felt fully convinced "that she had no cause for such profound "and mysterious secrecy to my sister."

"It is impossible, gentlemen! A host "of such paragraphs should not make me "to doubt Eliza's faith—friendship—libe- "rality—love for me. If we could get at "the original papers, from which this, and "the former paragraphs, were copied, I "do not doubt but we should find them "written by the self-same villainous hand."

"That would be a very difficult object

"to achieve, I am afraid, my lady," said the earl—"As I am inclined to believe "that the copies of all the paragraphs are "destroyed as soon as the compositor has "done with them."

"Perhaps not so very expeditiously, "my lord. And, really, my lady, I feel "so much interested in penetrating this "strange, unaccountable, affair, that I "would not hesitate a moment to give five "guineas to any one who could procure us "a sight of them."

The young *knight of the link*, whose presence during the interesting conversation had been totally unheeded, paid all possible attention and deference to such *great folks*; but the sound of five guineas made so forcible an impression on him, that he could keep silence no longer. He *hemmed* two or three times by way of beg-

ging attention; at last, he said—"Will "your honours crook your arms, and pray "that they may never come straight, if "you offer to *blab?* Because, if you will, "*bang me* if I don't *ax Dick Nimble* if "he'll do it for you. He's one of the "*'positors;* and, when I ben't upon *duty* "at the *Lyceum,* I goes into the printing-"office with beer, sometimes: and, for "the five guineas, I'm sure he'll do't. "Besides, its no such great things; and "you might have *em* yourselves for *axing* "for. Half the money will be a good "thing for him, only for looking over the "file;—and t'other half will get me some "*togs* to cut a bit of a *swell* with when I "goes to Brighton for the summer sea-"son."

"Hey! Brighton! Why, what do you "want to go to Brighton for, my boy?"—said Sir William.

"Please your honour, I'm to make my "*dib-but* there!" answered the boy.

"Your *dib-but!*" cried Sir William; while the earl and her ladyship could not restrain a smile—"Your *debut,* in what? "they want no link-boys there!"

"O, no, your honour, I'm to be *call-* "*boy!* and rise by seniority, *according* "*to merit.* And, when I'm *bang up* to "the *mum* and the *gag,* and can bring "down the *galleries,* and command a "*bumper* at my benefit, then, *bang me,* but "I'll take my old mother a tight little *ken;* "and she shall live snug in her old age."

"And, for that very speech, my boy, "will I give you five guineas more, to fit "you out for your pilgrimage to Brighton. "So now be quick; and see what you can "do about the paragraphs."—Sir William

then gave the lad the dates of the former paragraphs; and away ran the *urchin*, to gain the articles which were to procure such treasure; without again mentioning the *crooked arms*.

"That boy," observed Lady Harriett—"though he has imbibed some dreadful "ideas, cannot be radically bad, from "the humane and filial conclusion of his "*dib-but* information. I wish, with all my "heart, he may succeed."

"If there should really be some foun-"dation for this paragraph, my dear Lady "Harriett; what young nobleman can "we possibly fix on, for the matrimonial "expedition?"

"She knows none, my lord, except "the Marquis of Montresor; and, surely, "neither you, nor Sir William, would

"suspect that amiable young nobleman of
"being capable of an act of such base and
"insidious collusion?"

"Don't think a tittle about it, my "lady," said the baronet.—"And yet "there is somewhat very mysterious in "the conduct of that young *man* and his "friend. As they are here to-day, and "gone to-morrow; yet nobody hears why "or wherefore! I saw Sir George's servant "this morning, as I was going to my "lord, and asked how his master did. "—'Very well,' said the lad, 'but he, "and my lord, went out of town very "early, in a *post-chaise and four!*'— "Yes! A post-chaise and four, he said!"

"A post-chaise and four!" cried her ladyship.—"A post-chaise and four!" cried my lord. And, after a variety of further exclamations, and repetitions of—"im-

"possible! strange! curious!—It cannot "be!"—They separated, in some degree of doubt, as to the *cannot be*; but promised to return to dinner. By which time they hoped to hear of the *link-boy*.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW READILY WILL A WOUNDED MIND GLIDE FROM SUSPICION TO CERTAINTY.

THE gentlemen were punctual to the hour of dinner; and Lady Harriet was much relieved by their presence, from ideas, not actually arising from suspicion; but, rather the offspring of an irritable despondency, which would not suffer her, positively to enter the cavern of despair, nor yet permit her to withdraw from the door of it.

As the evening approached, surprise was frequently expressed, at the little *urchin* of a link-boy not returning with the paragraphs: and as the hour of retiring approached, the exclamation—" Where can " the blockhead stay?" gave place to others still more irksome.—" Ah! the " poor boy cannot prevail on the com- " positors to look for the paragraphs!"— or, " No, no! the papers are not to be " found; and the little rascal does not " think it worth while to call and tell us " so; though we, certainly, should pay " him for his trouble."

The next morning came; and again the hour of dinner: yet not a tittle of intelligence had been obtained. They had given up all hope of the boy calling. Sir William, however, happening to suggest the idea of some satisfaction, even in knowing the little blockhead's reason for not com-

ing; and observing, that, if they went to the *Lyceum*, they would most probably see him, either when going in, or coming out: all eagerly approved of the hint; and to the play they would go.—On so slender a thread did the anxiety of their minds urge them to hang their expectations of the evening!

On entering the theatre, not having taken places, it was with some difficulty that they could procure seats; the house having been well filled from the over-flowing of Covent Garden theatre: it being the first night of the appearance of the *horses*:—so true it is, that though pieces abounding with *mummery* may entertain an audience, when present, somewhat more attractive is necessary to draw them thither. And, when the attention was not roused by a *Kemble*, a *Siddons*, or a *Jordan*; the wonder can be but small, at

the natural and novel performance of *quadrupeds*, highly bred, and scientifically educated, drawing the curiosity of honest *John Bull's* family with superior strength and dexterity.

The entertainments of the evening were a modern opera, and a modern farce. But, with respect to the opera, the figure, science, voice, tones, features, expression, high comic powers, and low, of *Philipps*, *Mountain*, *Edwin*, *Lovegrove*, *Penson*, *Wrench*, and *Knight*, lost all their effect on our little party; whose minds were so intensely occupied—sometimes in reflecting on the pleasure they had there enjoyed in company with Eliza; and, at others, in anticipating the various excuses of the little negligent link-boy, for not calling in Grosvenor Square. Indeed, so much was her ladyship occupied in such

contemplations, that, on being asked by *Cato* how she had been entertained? She provoked a smile from him, by asking, in her turn, what piece had been performed? and frankly confessing, that her mind had been so confused, as not to retain a single syllable of the matter.

The sight of Sir George Osborne, by himself, soon called the recollection of the party to the paragraph in the morning papers; when various surmises to the prejudice of the Marquis of Montresor, would obtrude themselves, in spight of all efforts to the contrary.

After a very short pause, Sir George enquired concerning the health of Miss O'Mara; to which her ladyship, with a sigh, answered—"Well, I hope Sir "George."—As the gentleman did not

appear in good spirits, it can occasion little surprise, that such a reply should have induced to further silence.

The farce began, and the first act had passed off without a syllable; when Lady Harriett thinking it absolutely necessary to say somewhat, asked how the Marquis of Montresor was.

" He was very well, when I parted " with him the night before last, my " lady; but I begin to be apprehensive that " he is gone on a *wild-goose chase*, by his " delay."

" A wild-goose chase!—A wild-goose " chase!—A wild-goose chase!" was exclaimed by the wondering *trio*. And " which way! Where to!" made violent efforts to obtain utterance; but were re-

strained by the superior influence of good manners.

While all *four* gazed at each other, equally confused, and equally at a loss for expression, the Marquis himself entered the box—bowed to Lady Harriett, and looked round, evidently disappointed; then bowed to the Earl and Sir William.

"What news, my dear Marquis?" said Sir George, looking earnestly at his young friend.

"As usual, Sir George," was the reply—reinforced with a shrug of the shoulders.

"I feared so," said Sir George.—"How "cruel it is to be thus repeatedly tanta-"lized!"

The Marquis looked very expressively at Lady Harriett.—“ I hope your ladyship “ is not deprived of the company of your “ amiable friend, Miss O'Mara, through “ indisposition ?”

“ Indisposition !” exclaimed her ladyship.—“ I thought—no ; I beg pardon ! “ I did not actually think so. And I am “ now convinced that I should have erred “ most egregiously if I had. I suppose “ your lordship saw the paragraph in yes- “ terday's morning paper.”

“ I went out of town yesterday long “ before its publication ; and having my “ mind too much interested, I did not see “ a single paper on my journey. Nothing “ of any consequence, I hope.—Did you “ see yesterday's *Post*, Sir George ?”

“ No, my lord. I was not very well,

" yesterday; so did not peruse the " papers."

" Ha, ha, ha! How sweet Sir Yep is " on the charming widow, yonder!" cried Sir William.

" They were together in the same box " last night," said a gentleman to his friend.

All looked at the lady and Sir Yep. When Sir George, speaking softly to Lady Harriett, asked if the paragraph contained any thing very material?

Perfectly convinced of his innocence, both of the affair and its perpetrator, her ladyship, as softly as possible, frankly communicated the whole of the unhappy event; though not so softly as to prevent the Marquis from hearing sufficient to

throw him into a violent agitation; and to elicit from him a solemn oath, that he would never rest quietly until he had discovered the person in whose custody the *most amiable angel* was detained: and whether with her own consent or not.

On leaving the theatre, Sir George, who really seemed much affected by her ladyship's information, begged leave to call on the morrow; by which time, he hoped, some intelligence might be obtained.—They parted at the end of the passage. The carriage of Sir George being near Exeter 'Change; while that of her ladyship could approach no nearer than the corner of Catherine Street.

"Get out of the way, you little *black-* "*guard!*" said one of the footmen, while closing the door of the carriage, and pushing one of the link-boys away from it.

"I sha'n't—I will speak—I'm sure I'm "right. I'm *bang up* to a thing or two "here. Please your honours, I've got "the *squibs!*" cried the boy, as loud as he could speak.

"*Squibs!* God bless me! Pull up the "glass, Sir William. Surely the block-"head does not want to throw them in "here!"—And her ladyship felt much alarmed.

"Yes, your honours; the *squibs* you "sent me upon the *scout* for yesterday." —And the identical link-boy, whose very existence, since the meeting with Sir George and the Marquis, had escaped their recollection, held up the papers to the window.

"Hey! What! Squibs!—Get out you "young—Ha, ha!—'Tis the boy him-

"self!—Well, my good boy!—What, "these are the paragraphs, are they?"—said Sir William.

"Hissing hot, your honours! Only "just off the file. Could n't do the job "till just now, your honours. Should *ha* "brought *em* to-morrow morning, if I "had n't seen you."

"Well, well! Come to me to-morrow, "and I will give you the money I pro-"mised you."

"Please your honour, here's my *snack's* "at my elbow; and he wants to touch "the *possibles* now."

"*Snacks! possibles!* Why, what do "you mean, you little rogue?"

"Please your honour, he wants his

" share of the five *quid*—of the *blunt*—of " the *ready*."

" Oh! Aye! Well! There! There's a " five-pound note, divide it between you; " and, when you are inclined to start for " Brighton, come to me, and I will give " you as much more.—Go on!—Ha, ha, " ha, ha! We have got the paragraphs at " last, my lady.—And now, my lord, " what is the odds that they are all in the " same hand-writing?"

Her ladyship was so thoroughly convinced, that she would lay any thing—yet ventured to lay nothing. His lordship began to suspect they would not prove so; but did not feel inclined to bet upon the subject. Indeed, he entertained a wish that they might not prove so; because, the greater the man, the greater the influence.

As soon as seated in Grosvenor Square, the squibs, as the link-boy called them, were instantly displayed—duly examined—and changed about from hand to hand. They were deemed similar:—they were deemed *not* similar. The *m*'s, the *n*'s, the *o*'s, the *i*'s, the *e*'s, and *a*'s, were positively similar; but the *d*'s, the *p*'s, the *l*'s, and the tops of the *h*'s, were positively *not* similar.—They must have been written by the same person.—They could *not* have been written by the same person. Such, and so varied, were their opinions, that, when the supper was announced, they sat down, not a jot more satisfied on the subject of the paragraphs than when they went to the play: and the only inducement to eat, on the part of Lady Harriett, was the fervid resolution evinced by the gallant Marquis, to explore the mystery at all events.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW VERSATILE MUST PASSION BE, WHEN A MELANCHOLY LOOK WILL ROUSE IMPLACABLE RESENTMENT, AND A SMILE DISSIPATE THE MOST VIRULENT RANCOUR!

ANOTHER day had elapsed; and, after tea, the Earl, Lady Harriett, and Sir William, had sitten down to a pool at *tredrill;* though much more attentive to the sound of the street-door than to the game. About ten o'clock a loud rap claimed their attention, and Sir George Osborne, and the Marquis of Montresor, were announced. Cards were immediately

thrown aside—somewhat about supper was mentioned by her ladyship to the servant —and the visitors were received, *sans ceremonie*, in the garden-parlour.

It may very naturally be supposed, that few words passed before that of *news* obtruded itself; and, in this instance, Sir George happened to be the first inquirer. "Not a syllable!—Not a syllable!—Not "a syllable!" was the answer of each.— Even Sir William was perfectly regular in his responsive negative. In fact, he daily merited the name of *Vacant* less and less. And her ladyship had, more than once, paid him the highly flattering compliment of threatening to exert her influence at court, and procure the royal authority for changing it, without a fortune left, or the name degraded.

"We, my lady," said Sir George, "have

"caught the end of a *clue* which *may* lead
"to somewhat of consequence; though,
"at present, I hardly dare flatter myself,
"much more your ladyship. The Mar-
"quis, last night, or, rather early this
"morning, for it was past one o'clock, I
"find, observed a carriage, with the
"blinds drawn up, drive most furiously
"into the area of a certain young noble-
"man's house; and the gates were in-
"stantly shut! As my dear young friend,
"and the nobleman, are on very good
"terms, he has written to his lordship on
"the subject; and is beginning to be a
"little uneasy at an answer being so long
"delayed. Should one arrive, during our
"absence from home, we have directed that
"it may follow us: but, should nothing
"come by breakfast-time to-morrow, I
"have consented that my lord shall write
"to him again; and, in failure of an imme-
"diate answer, make him a personal visit."

Many compliments were made to the visitors, for the kind interest which they took in so mysterious an affair; and many expressions escaped the marquis, which left not a doubt on the minds of any, that *Cupid* was his *pilot* in the search he was making. Nay, the Earl felt himself so thoroughly satisfied on that head, that he did actually threaten to make an example of the cruel ruffian!—Well convinced that nothing would more assuredly engage the parliamentary influence of a young nobleman, of immense estate, than threatening to chastise the man who has insulted the woman he loves—the woman so basely torn from him.

About eleven o'clock the servant entered with a letter for the Marquis of Montresor.

The Marquis looked at the seal—" It

"is from his lordship, Sir George; and, "of course, can contain nothing which "need to be hidden from this company.— "Be so good to read it."

Sir George, with a smile of approbation, took the letter, and broke the seal—

Letter from the —— of —— to the Marquis of Montresor.

"My dear Marquis,

"Though I do not exactly "see the propriety of being called to an "account about my carriage driving some- "what rapidly to my own door; and "whether a certain lady of your acquaint- "ance was not in it! yet, in considera- "tion of our intimacy—may I flatter my- "self by saying friendship—I will cheer- "fully assure your lordship, upon my "honour! the lady in that carriage was

"not the lady you allude to; but a per-
"son of the first family and fortune: and
"who, by the time you receive this, will
"be far on her way towards Scotland,
"with,

"My dear Marquis,

"Your's, most sincerely,

"——."

"Humph!" cried Sir George—"This snaps our *clue* asunder most completely. "For this, from your friend, my lord, I "will venture to pronounce SACRED."

Highly flattered at the confidence, as well as compliment, of the Marquis and Sir George, in so unreserved a communication of the contents of the letter, the little disappointed party were gazing on each other for further intelligence, when, after some murmurs of surprise and fear, distinctly heard from the hall, the door

opened, and a figure, wrapped in a surtout-coat, with a hat on, and a double-barrelled pistol in each hand, entered the room! The gentlemen started! Her ladyship was unable to stir! It walked up to the card-table—laid the pistols down very carefully:—then hastily glancing an eye round the room, it moved quickly towards Lady Harriet—sank on its knees—the head in her lap! and fervently, though scarcely audible even to her ladyship, addressed itself to Heaven!

The gentlemen were, for some moments, fascinated; but, recollecting themselves, and alarmed for her ladyship, they were rushing to her protection, when she held up her hand as a signal for attention; and, casting her eyes towards Heaven, exclaimed—"Thanks!—Thanks, O my "God!—It is my sweet Eliza!"

"Eliza!" cried all the noble gazers—"Can it be possible!" For, unable to account for the abrupt appearance of the amiable girl, in such a garb, she was not even thought of.

"Yes! Thanks! Thanks, O my God! "as my dearest Lady Harriett so emphatically expressed herself—it is Eliza, "indeed!"—Then rising up, she curtsied to the company; and blushing, on meeting the eyes of the Marquis, she seated herself on the sofa—"Thanks, O my "God! it is Eliza!" she again pronounced, and burst into tears.

Soon recovered by the tender endearments of Lady Harriett; who, taking the lovely *forlorn* by the arm, apologized to the gentlemen for depriving them of their amiable visitor, for a few minutes; they were leaving the room, when Eliza stop-

ped suddenly, saying—" Take care of the " pistols.—The contents of one barrel a " ruffian has received in his body.—Sir " Yep Flankem has received the balls of " two ; but one still remains charged."—She then retired with her ladyship.

Sir William immediately secured the pistols. The ideas of the company, then, as by consent, reverted to the cause—the duration—and the consequence, of Miss O'Mara's confinement. The Earl and Sir William entertained some awkward surmises :—those of Sir George arose to severe apprehension ; while the agitation of the Marquis may be better conceived than expressed. But, at all events, the life of Sir Yep Flankem became far more deprecated than our poor—unfortunate—much envied, paper-currency.—It was scarcely worth a pepper-corn ! As he was to be *shot*—only by three of them ! while Sir

George was determined that he should be *—hanged by the neck,* by due course of law!—And the climax of their vengeance received no trifling degree of tension by her ladyship's few minutes having already exceeded half an hour! which, they fancied, could be occasioned by nothing less than peculiar reluctance in Miss O'Mara to return to the company, after having communicated an unreserved tale of horror to her noble and most amiable friend! —O Sir Yep! what was to have become of thee!

At length the door was opened; and her ladyship introduced her lovely friend, with—almost, a smile on her beauteous countenance; heightened by a plentiful portion of *vermeille,* on again meeting the eyes of the Marquis.

While they were taking their seats at

the supper-table, the Earl, unwilling that his valorous denunciations should be lost to any of the party, told the ladies of the many deaths Sir Yep Flankem had been doomed to for his misconduct.

"I hope not," said Eliza—"Sir Yep is "already suffering under my vengeance, "my lord: and, I must say, equal to the "punishment inflicted on me; though I "will not presume to say, what further "punishment he might have had in store. "But I am happy to confess, that his be-"haviour, while I was in his power, was "far better than I could have expected—"from such a man. My absence, too, "has taught me to be proud of existence, "since it has procured me the good wishes "of two such noble friends, in addition to "my dearest Lady Harriett, the Earl, and "Sir William. Therefore, those amiable "friends, whose goodness prompts them to

"extend their kind wishes to my future
"piece of mind, may be assured, that the
"best possible way to secure it, will be,
"by, this instant, passing an act of am-
"nesty. Thank God, I am safe! And
"may his infinite goodness graciously
"ordain that *we* may all continue so!"

As the gentlemen were now amply convinced of the safety of Eliza; and their resentment much softened by that lady's frank acknowledgement that she had experienced far better treatment than she could have expected; they readily promised to obey her humane injunction.— All but Sir William, who observed a profound silence on the subject; but was soon appealed to by Lady Harriet, who hoped he would have no objection to sign the *treaty of peace.*

"Peace!" exclaimed Sir William—

" Impossible! No, no, my lady! a deal
" of blood must be shed before that can
" be effected. Besides, now that he stands
" so universally exposed, in so many
" truly detestable points of view; and has
" enemies starting up in every corner—
" at such a time to think of peace"—

" Bless me, Sir William!" cried Eliza.
—The gentlemen looked at each other.

" Ha, ha, ha! (laughed her ladyship).
" Why, my dear Eliza, I thought you
" knew Sir William better! I'll bet him,
" what he calls the *long-odds*, that he did
" not hear a single syllable, either of your
" speech or mine, except the momentous
" word *peace;* which he instantly nega-
" tived *nem. con.;* and is now most gal-
" lantly engaging the French army in Por-
" tugal!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!—Beg your pardon, "upon my honour, my lady!—Thought "you were for making peace, just now, "when war assumes an aspect so propi- "tious to the *peninsula*."

A hearty laugh at Sir William's blunder, and his ready concurrence in the amnesty proposed by Eliza, made all the party take a cheerful meal; and the evening was spent not more delightfully than interestingly. Just before they separated, Sir George Osborne entreated, for himself and friend, to be sometimes admitted to such a happy party; on condition that they would honour him, and his dear friend, with their company in return.—My lord promised—my lady promised—Sir William bowed assent—and Eliza blushed it.

CHAPTER XVII.

WOULD EVERY WOMAN FEEL HER OWN CONSEQUENCE, AND DULY ASSERT IT, HOW MANY MIGHT AVOID A STATE OF DEGRADATION, OFTENTIMES MORE THE EFFECT OF TIMIDITY THAN CRIME!

HAVING dispersed the little party in perfect pood humour with each other, and comparatively happy at the conclusion of an evening after so inauspicious a commencement of it, we will give our readers a brief sketch of Miss O'Mara's very strange adventure.

The *link-boy*, it seems, was perfectly right, as to the young lady being forced into the carriage, and the expressions made use of, by the ruffians, to shield themselves from suspicion, and cover the violence of their proceedings. She was dreadfully alarmed at being forced into a strange carriage, as may very naturally be supposed: nor did the language which the men made use of, while literally dragging her along, afford the least consolation, as to a possibility of a mistake having been committed; because, the very instant before she was seized, she heard one of the party say—"That is Miss O'Mara next "to you." Still, when seated in the carriage, a coolness and caution, the subject of astonishment even to herself, never forsook her, even for a moment; though deprived of sight by a handkerchief being bound round her head, she could distinctly hear the voices of the very same two men

whom Lady Harriett and herself had overheard, and so often observed, in Kensington Gardens—the park—and Grosvenor Square: the tallest of whom, it at that instant, struck her imagination, for the first time, must have been Sir Yep Flankem! Consequently she knew, that, if really so, she must be in hands with whom timidity would little avail her, but might prove her ruin.

Being solemnly assured, that, if she remained quiet, she had nothing to fear, the lovely prisoner made a virtue of necessity; and employed those moments in eager and serious reflection which many would have wasted in useless efforts and ineffectual upbraidings. The carriage hastened, with the utmost speed, directly home; which was rather an impolitic mode of procedure, with so wary a passenger, as she distinctly ascertained her

route through the Strand—up the Hay-market and Mary-le-bone Street—through Conduit Street — Bond Street — Brook Street—and Grosvenor Square, to the identical house.—And, while hurrying her from the carriage, when ascending the steps, she, with all the *sang froid* which she could possibly assume, said—" This " is Sir Yep Flankem's !" A murmur of confusion, mixed with surprise, convinced her that she was right; and, most probably, procured that lenient treatment, which was so much better than she had expected: for, though the people positively denied that it was the residence of Sir Yep, she made up her mind as to the certainty of it; and was not to be biassed to the contrary.

While conducting up stairs, it required the utmost exertion of her fortitude to suppress the appearance of terror. Hap-

pily she succeeded, to the admiration of her conductors; and repeatedly cautioned them, in an audible and most impressive manner, saying—"Take care what you "do, gentlemen!"—which conduct seemed to have no trifling effect on them.

When the bandage was taken off from Eliza's eyes, she found herself in an elegant drawing-room, suitably illuminated; and was there left to meditate on her situation. She paced the room cautiously—listened to every footstep—every murmur: then addressing a fervent prayer to the Almighty, for strength and protection;—she had just resolved, with an impulse which she flattered herself was somewhat more than mortal, to assume the *heroine*, should any insult be offered her, as the door opened, and a young woman, of most elegant form, but disgusting demeanor, entered, with a large tray, in which was the

apparatus for supper; with a boiled chicken, a decanter of wine, and a decanter of water. Eliza could not refrain from looking at the young woman's face with more than common attention; and, to her equal horror and astonishment, soon recognized the *equestrian lady* who got the fall from her horse in Hyde Park!—She paid a momentary mental compliment to Lady Harriett's superior power of perception; and turned her head, in disgust, resolved to be on her guard against the arts of such a person.

While the young woman was laying the cloth, she made many attempts at conversation with Eliza; but was as often disappointed: the lovely *prisoner* not deeming it prudent to commit herself, even in distant conversation, until she had made some further observations; though she would have been happy to obtain infor-

mation. She really felt hungry; and, knowing what a long walk she would have to perform, (as she determined not to think of sleeping, or even venturing to sit, lest she should fall into a dose); she, therefore, ate part of the chicken, but would not taste the wine. The water was perfectly lympid—she tasted it; and perceiving no peculiar flavour, ventured to drink a tumbler full of it. The things were then removed by the same person who brought them; who, pointing to a door, said—" Your bed-room is there, " Ma'am,"—and withdrew; muttering, loud enough to be heard—" What a fuss, " indeed! I see no such great things! If " he had wanted a *wife*, he might have " got one as handsome as she, and thank " you too!"

Having heard the door locked, and the key taken out, as if to prevent any

other person from opening it, a momentary tremor shot through the bosom of Eliza.—If any one else is to come to molest me, why take the key from the door? thought she.—Or have they a more convenient mode of entering the bed-room reserved for a *female* ? She paused for some moments—winked her eyes with the utmost effort, to repress a few tears which were fast approaching; then bolted the drawing-room door, and, taking a light, cautiously surveyed the bed-room, and the small dressing-room adjoining. The closets seemed to have been left open, purposely that she might appreciate her own safety. This apparently candid mode pleased her for the moment; till recollecting that it might be a lure to draw her from precaution. The bed-room door was locked on the outside, and the key taken out; but there were bolts enough within side to render her mind easy in that re-

spect; and the dressing-room had no communication but with the bed-room. The windows were all screwed down, and strong wire blinds were screwed to the frames: but the shutters were wholly at her disposal. Though flattered, from a repetition of such surveys, that there was no personal violence to apprehend for that night, Eliza would neither lie down, nor, even, sit, until it was so fully day-light, that *Phœbus* actually made his ruddy appearance.—Then, oppressed with a drowsy stupor, which was so intense as to lull the powers of recollection, she dropped on the sofa, and slept most soundly.

About ten o'clock, the *equestrian lady* knocked at the door, and announced breakfast. The door was, with some degree of reluctancy, opened, and the breakfast placed on the table, though Eliza repeatedly declared, she did not *feel it pru-*

deut to take any. The *equestrian lady* having performed her duty, gave a shrug of astonishment and retired; no doubt to communicate the monstrous perverseness of the *person, who was no such great things!* For, in a few minutes, a gentleman, of respectable appearance, about thirty years of age, entered the drawing room, and, after solemnly professing himself a clergyman of the Church of England, protested that she need be under no apprehension from any food or drink which might be offered her in that house; as he could call the Almighty to witness, that every idea relative to her, *at present*, was strictly honourable.

So certified of safety, Eliza ate a role, and took two cups of tea; the gentleman all the time remaining in the room: and who, as soon as the breakfast things were removed, begged permission to communi-

cate an affair of consequence, with which he was entrusted by a friend, high in the estimation of the world. When, receiving an inclination of assent from Eliza, who was not sorry for the commencement of the *doneuoement*, that the piece might the sooner be brought to a conclusion; he began opening his embassy nearly as follows: and, as follow, nearly, were the lady's replies.

" Many ladies, possessing but small fortunes, Madam, would receive the commission delegated to me, with pleasure and pride;—may you, for the future welfare of my worthy patron, honour it with complacent attention!—My patron, Madam, is possessed of a princely fortune—many very estimable qualifications—and few of a contrary nature, which a smile from you would not eradicate: and he loves you to distraction.

"He is not only determined to marry you, "Madam, but to make a settlement in your "behalf, equal to that of the first duchess "in the United Kingdom—equal to your "wishes.—I presume, Madam, from the "inquiries already made, you are not, at "present, pre-engaged?"

Pre-engaged was a *chord* of very delicate tone, the vibration of which would have roused a suffusion, had not the bold stroke, on the *chord* of irritability—the *inquiries already made*, driven it back with a smile of disdain. Looking, almost with a frown, at the gentleman of respectable appearance, she said—"That question, Sir, might be "almost as easily answered—as put, did "propriety permit me so to do; but, "thus constrained, I can only say—it is "unanswerable. Where is this gentle-"man?—Who is he?—Why does he not "come here and speak for himself? The

" people who dragged me hither, denied " that this was Sir Yep Flankem's man- " sion.—I am confident it is. I well know, " Sir, in whose power I am. My life is " in Sir Yep Flankem's hands; but, I " trust, he will find that my honour is in " my own. And I would advise him, and " his co-adjutors, well to weigh the re- " sponsibility which will attach to such " conduct, before any nefarious attempt " at violence be rashly resorted to."

" As you do not seem to credit the as- " sertion of those, Madam, who have al- " ready told you that this is not Sir Yep " Flankem's mansion, so neither would " you credit me, were I to corroborate " such assertion. But, whoever the owner " of the mansion may be, Madam, he will " be invisible to you, until made a *happy* " *man* by your consent to be his wife; or, " a *maniac*, by your cruel refusal. I have

"already assured you, Madam, that you "are perfectly safe from violence *while in* "*this house* :—I again, solemnly, pledge "myself on the same subject. I am ex-"tremely sorry to hear you speak so de-"terminately in the negative—to what I "deem a liberal proposal. I am now to "inform you, Madam, that you must re-"main here till to-morrow evening; by "which time the settlement will be duly "engrossed, and a special licence pro-"cured. Should you then refuse to ac-"cept the hand of my patron, I cannot, "after such refusal shall be made, be an-"swerable for the conduct of a man, "driven to desperation by your disdain."

"There is an apparent candour in your "conduct, Sir, which, if genuine, might "qualify a gentleman of your sacred pro-"fession, for a commission somewhat "more honourable than that on which you

"are at present employed. The conduct "of your employer, Sir, I must say, is "not less cowardly than vile. He keeps "himself invisible, in hope of skulking "from punishment; and basely throws "the odium of his own infamous machi-"nations, on the backs of his *creatures.* "But let him have a care, Sir; he may "stand exposed to the vengeance of of-"fended justice sooner than he is aware of. "I now declare to you, Sir, with candour "equal, at least, to what I perceived, "that, whenever I pledge my vows to be "the wife of any man, my person shall "be as free and unrestrained as I now feel "my mind to be. But, of all men on "earth, Sir Yep Flankem is the first to "whom I solemnly and sincerely vow "never to give my hand at the altar! "Such a resolution, and so made, Sir, "will, I presume, rid me of any farther "parley on such a subject. With your

"leave then, Sir, I will wish you a good "morning.—At the same time, Sir, I feel "it incumbent on me to make you my "best thanks for your polite conduct "during the execution of a commission, "which, I will venture to hope, was little "less irksome to you than to myself."— The lady then walked to one of the windows—the gentleman sighed audibly, and left the room.

Eliza threw herself on the sofa. She really felt ~~shagrined~~ Chagrined, that a gentleman, of the sacred profession, should so much have debased himself, as to come to her, in such a situation, with such a proposal, and from such a man.—"Pre-engaged," thought she—"suppose I am not *actually* "pre-engaged—suppose the Marquis of "Montresor has not absolutely declared "himself, what is that to Sir Yep Flank- "em, or any other man on earth?—A

" vile, skulking *monster!*—and with such " *cats-paws,* too!—No! whether pre- " engaged or not, I will remain single for " ever, rather than yield my vows to such " a wretch! Heavens! what a difference " between the gallant—the amiable—the " —the—the much esteemed Marquis, " and this despicable driver of *barouches!*" In such, and such-like thoughts, did the lovely Eliza attempt to lose the lazy minutes.

Dinner was served up by the *equestrian lady,* about four o'clock.—Tea—supper—breakfast—dinner—and tea again; yet no other soul had offered to enter the room.—Nor had the sound of Sir Yep's voice been once heard!—But, after the tea-equipage had been removed, on the second day, the *clergyman,* of such *respectable appearance,* entered the drawing-room, with a prayer-book in his hand, and introduced

a person bearing a large packet of parchment; and who professed himself the solicitor of the gentleman with the *princely fortune and many estimable qualifications.* For, hitherto, no name had been mentioned!

The solicitor, with much formality, informed Miss O'Mara, that he was the bearer of a deed of settlement, in which *five thousand pounds per annum* was amply secured to her, in case she should survive the princely *donor* of so capital a dower; and asked the lady if she would permit him to read the deed? The clergyman appeared most attentive to the scene, and had laid his book on the table. Eliza walked up to the table without speaking a single syllable. She took up the book.—It opened at the communion service.—She elevated the book, and her eyes, towards her Maker—then exclaimed aloud—" So

" help me Heaven! I never will wed with " Sir Yep Flankem!"—Then kissing the Sacraments with fervour, she laid the book on the table; and firmly paced the room. Sir Yep had, no doubt, heard the fervour of her refusal ever to wed with him; as, in less than a minute, a bell rang violently, and the gentlemen instantly left the room.

"Now," thought Eliza, " the die is " cast! I have passed the rubicon! O Pro- " vidence! be thou my guide, my pre- " server!—Thou can'st shield the weakest " from a Hercules. Oh! be Thou my " strength—my conductor!"

In somewhat less than half an hour, the *equestrian lady*, attended by a young woman of her own size nearly, entered the room, with a brown *surtout-coat*, and a man's hat; and requested Eliza to put

them on, or they would be compelled to force her to wear them; as the carriage was ready at the back-door, to take her into the country: and she must travel as much like a man as possible.

Though a little alarmed at such intelligence, Eliza was not actually apprehensive of personal danger: on the contrary, she rather attributed the journey to a manœuvre of intimidation—a hope of frightening her into consent. And, as the young woman was of a robust form, and had a ferocious eye, with a countenance so mangled with the small-pox, as to make the lovely prisoner tremble at her, she thought she might as well put the things on quietly, as be compelled to wear them. She, therefore, was soon robed in the *surtout*, but not without the assistance of the young woman, who was somewhat roughly officious—much more so than was desired.

On putting the hat upon Eliza's head, she said—"Poh! This is too small by half! "This won't do! you must get one bigger!"—Though, by the bye, the hat fitted tolerably well. However, the *equestrian lady* immediately withdrew to get a larger hat—when the young woman whispered—"Lord help you, Miss! Why "didn't you pay more regard to the letter "of poor Mary?"

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Eliza, "Was that letter of caution from you, my "dear?"

"Yes, it was, indeed! And if you go "into the country you are lost for ever; "as the *monster* sticks at nothing there! "That is my poor sister, that is just gone "out: but she is not to be trusted, though "she be my sister; so I sent her for another hat."

" What, my dear girl! can be done to
" extricate me from this horrid situa-
" tion?"

" The lawyer is gone, Miss; and all
" the servants, but us two, be sent out of
" the way; 'cause, in case of an accident,
" they should'nt be witnesses. So there's
" only Sir Yep, and the parson, and the
" bruiser, in the house, besides *we*. I
" can get a *couple of carving-knives*, and
" will use *one*, and well too, if you have a
" mind to make a *bolt*, and will stand by
" me. For I wouldn't mind losing twenty
" lives, if I had *em*, to save you, and be
" revenged upon that confounded great
" villain, Sir Yep."

" Fly, then, my guardian angel! Bring
" the knives, and Heaven strengthen me
" to use one!"

The young woman left the room, and returned in a minute, saying—"Look "here, Miss! Gwillam, the valet, has "left his master's *double-barrelled pistols* "upon the table in the passage. Do you "know how to use them?—Well, well, "look here! I'll shew you; for I *ha* "played with *em* many a time with my "sister. Mind, they are all cocked: so "you have only to pull the nearest *trigger* "first; and then they won't go off to-"gether, and waste powder. Ha! she "be coming! Come this way; and, when "she do come in, we must slip out, and "lock the door; or she'll alarm the house "and ruin all. I'll take both knives: "and if you do but take your own part, "we sha'n't be very easily stopped, I "think."

The *equestrian lady* entered with another hat; while her sister and Eliza

slipped from behind the door, and, leaving the room, locked the sister in. The *eques-trian lady* shrieked as loud as she could halloo; and the *bruiser,* running from an adjoining room, with the *parson,* the former received the contents of Eliza's first fire in his side; while the *clergyman* received a desperate wound from one of Mary's knives. They had actually reached the hall, and Mary was opening the street door, when Sir Yep rushed forward, and seized the muzzle of Eliza's pistol—crying "By Heaven you shall not escape!"—She felt that moment to be the very crisis of her fate; so, resolving to exert herself, she pulled both the *triggers* at the same instant, and shattered his hand to pieces! They then ran into the street.—Eliza gazed about her in amasement.—"Here, Miss! follow me!" cried Mary "—It is but a few yards to your own "house!" They ran, and arrived, as we

have already seen: nor were they followed by a single individual! The large knives of the brave defender of Eliza, startled the servants in Lady Loveplumb's hall; until she made the reason of such abrupt and formidable appearance known to them; when she was cheerfully conducted to the house-keeper, who warmly embraced her, as the friend and preserver of the amiable and highly-beloved Miss O'Mara.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MORE HEROIC AND NERVOUS AN ACT OF FEMALE EXERTION IS, THE MORE WILL THE HUMAN FRAME BECOME DEBILITATED, AFTER THE NECESSITY FOR SUCH EFFORT HAS CEASED.

THOUGH the tender endearments of Lady Harriett—the friendly anxiety of the Earl and Sir William—and the marked attention of Sir George Osborne and the Marquis of Montresor, had tended much to give tone to the spirits of Eliza, during the remainder of the evening of her happy and heroic escape, yet the following

morning found her afflicted with a considerable portion of fever; which was succeeded by a languor that kept her confined to the house for nearly a month. Nor did her gallant preserver wholly escape; but the attention of the servants, and the kind promises of Lady Harriett, that she should be amply provided for, soon brought the brave Mary about. Indeed, the confinement of Eliza was very little regretted by that lady, as Sir George and the Marquis were daily visitors. And Lady Harriett, with the Earl, and Sir William, actually rejoiced at it; as such constant attendance evidently evinced more than merely common civility.

Yet, in all this time, not a single paragraph had appeared in any of the papers, containing the most distant allusion to the "miraculous escape," as Eliza used most emphatically to term it. All the daily

prints had announced the *dreadful misfortune* which befell Sir Yep Flankem; and the consequent amputation of his arm below the elbow. But they invariably attributed the affair wholly to the accidental bursting of a pistol in the *unfortunate* baronet's hand!—And, as to the wounded *clergyman, of respectable appearance*, and the *bruiser*, who, with his friends, were to stand as good a *milling* as ever the *glutton* did, not a syllable of their misfortunes was ever mentioned at all. Though, since their recovery, we have been informed, that the former thought it prudent to make a voyage to America; and, the latter, to Ireland.

Such determined silence, on such very serious subjects, conduced, in no trifling degree, to promote Miss O'Mara's recovery; as, had either died in consequence of the desperate *rencontre*, a co-

roner's inquest must have been held ; and the papers, to a certainty, would have reported the issue of the investigation. A visit to Covent Garden theatre, to see *Cato*, with the magnificent spectacle of *Timour the Tartar*, was, therefore, readily assented to ; and not with more *reluctance* on the part of the lovely *convalescent*, because the *whole* of the party were to go together.

As Sir George and the Marquis handed the ladies into the box, the eyes of the audience were evidently attracted towards the spot, for a short time, as well to the confusion, as to the pride of Eliza. But the appearance of the *Roman patriarch* soon drew the attention of all to the stage. Nor were the audience less pleased with the superb costumes of the various characters, than delighted at the exalted dignity —the patriotic fervour—and heroic dis-

dain of life, when he could no longer save or serve his country, of the *great Cato of Kemble.*

As soon as the curtain dropped, Sir George Osborne said, with a sigh—" What " a pity, that the griping hand of Nature " should ever be suffered to draw such " performers as a *Kemble* and a *Siddons*, " from the admiration of a British au- " dience !"

" Draw !" exclaimed Sir William, who had caught hold of that monosyllable— " They must draw every thing, to be " sure ! I was present the other night to " see *Blue Beard !*—The most beautiful " creatures that I ever saw !

" Hum !"—said an old gentleman who sat on the next seat, little less absent than Sir William.—" As excellent as you

"please, Sir; and the audience will "readily agree with you. But sueh per- "formers as *Siddons* and *Kemble* are "above flattery: and don't, now, set "themselves up for the most beautiful "creatures that ever were seen!"

"Hey! How! What!—What about "*Siddons* and *Kemble*, Sir?"

"You are lost, Sir William!" said the Earl.—Eliza smiled.—Lady Harriett tittered.

"Oh!—Aye!—I forgot!—I beg par- "don!—*Siddons* and *Kemble* in *Blue* "*Beard*"—The ringing of the bell for the beautiful overture arrested the attention of the party; and shielded Sir William from a general laugh.

Soon after the commencement of the

piece, on the entrance of the *Georgian Princess,* the elderly gentleman cried—"There!—Who wants a Siddons or a "Kemble now! A woman on horseback "on an English stage is of more conse- "quence by half."

"We always greet beauty with applause "on a British stage, Sir," said Sir George "—And I trust we shall ever greet so "lovely a performer, and so interestingly "situated, with our admiration, too."—"Humph!" was all the reply; and the piece went on.

In the hurry of the assault, and the escape of the princess, the ladies felt absolutely impelled to join in the violent applause; loudly declaring that they could not have thought it possible for the managers to introduce such a spectacle; or to train

those beautiful animals, the horses, to so great a degree of perfection.

" Aye! aye! 'Tis very well for young " people to see, ladies," murmurred the elderly gentleman—" But *we*, who have " seen a little more of the world, ought " to know better."

Sir George felt the reproof, as, no doubt it was meant—levelled at himself; so, good-naturedly, replied—" You will " allow, Sir, that a great majority of a " theatrical audience, consists of young " people; therefore is such an indulgence " of the managers even laudable. And, " suffer me to ask, if *our* entertainment " has been worse than usual? For my " own part, Sir, I think the piece, merely " as a farce, possesses full as much merit, " both in point of language and incident,

"as the best of our modern farces. Where "will you meet with a scene, in a modern "farce, more interesting, and better per- "formed, than that wherein the *Princess* "*of Georgia* so dexterously—so patheti- "cally—so exquisitely anxious for the "safety of her child, averts the atten- "tion of *Timour*, while that excellent "comedian, *Fawcett*, effects the escape "of the darling boy?—You, yourself, Sir, "must, no doubt, have seen the necessity "of the ludicrous substitute—*mummery*, "to enable an audience to sit out a modern "farce, after a *Siddons* and a *Kemble* had "treated them with a play of Shakspeare. "Therefore do the proprietors not only "evince their good sense and liberality, in "treating us with spectacle, to be enjoyed "no where else in Europe; but their hu- "manity to their performers also, by ren- "dering the fatigue—the irksomeness of "*mummery* less requisite." To such ob-

servations no reply was attempted—and the piece closing with universal applause, our party prepared for departure.

Though surrounded with the four gentlemen, and their servants duly instructed, Eliza could not help experiencing a considerable degree of timidity; and was so eager to get into her carriage, that, missing her step, she fell with her breast against the bottom of it. She gave a slight shriek; but soon declaring herself unhurt, a momentary confusion subsided, of course, and the carriage drove on.

As the night was fast advancing towards twelve, supper was announced as soon as the party arrived; and the company were taking their places, when Sir William happening to touch Eliza with his elbow as he passed her, she again shrieked.

Lady Harr' tt, looking attentively, exclaimed—"Good Heavens! you bleed, "my dear!" Then taking her by the arm, they instantly withdrew, while a surgeon was sent for.

In about a quarter of an hour her ladyship returned to the company, apologizing for the absence of her lovely friend, who, from the situation of a slight wound, the consequence of her fall, was compelled to undress; and though the surgeon had solemnly declared it a *mere trifle*, yet he deemed *barley-water* more appropriate for the present evening, than *supper*: so she had gone to bed.

The gentlemen, especially the Marquis, had been most severely alarmed for Eliza's safety; of course, were happy on receiving so favourable a report, yet could not help wondering how she could have been

so wounded by so trifling a stumble. Sir George, just as the cloth was drawn, observed, that there must have been some nail projecting from the wood-work, to have effected it.

"O no, Sir George!" said her ladyship —"it was from the point of the half of a "*sixpenny-piece* (which she has, from her "infancy, worn round her neck), perfo-"rating the skin by the force of the fall, "that the wound was made."

Sir George started at the mention of the half of a *six-penny-piece* causing the wound; and, looking very wistfully at Lady Harriett, said—"The half of a *six-"penny-piece* is a very awkward thing to "be worn in the bosom of a lady; there-"fore, I presume, the cause could not "be trifling which has kept it there so "long."

"It was inclosed in a letter, pinned underneath her frock, and supposed to be "written by her mother, when she was "first induced to enter our house."

"Inclosed in a letter! underneath her "frock!—entered your house!—What is "all this, my lady?—I understood that "Miss O'Mara was a relation of your's."

"Not in the least, Sir George. Though "I could not be more warmly attached to "the lovely creature, were she actually "my sister. But, suffer me to assure you, "gentlemen, I should not have been so "communicative, had not Eliza, since the "frequency of certain visits with which "we have recently been honoured, fervently urged me to make every dis"covery in my power. As the very idea "of delusion was her aversion."

" Amiable woman !" exclaimed the Marquis, highly delighted with such candour.

" Amiable, indeed !" said Sir George— " But Miss O'Mara can lose nothing of " our estimation by such truly ingenuous " conduct. I know not how it is, my " lady, but I have a strange anxiety to be- " hold that half of a *six-penny-piece* which " has done such mischief."

" She was advised by the surgeon not " to wear it again, until the wound is per- " fectly healed; I, therefore, put it in " my ridicule, thinking to give it to Eliza " in the morning, as she is so very fond of " it."—Her ladyship then delivered the piece to Sir George.

" God Almighty!" exclaimed he—" It

"is very like—but I have been so often "deceived in my vain pursuits. Yet I "cannot help feeling strangely interested "in Miss O'Mara's welfare; and not on "account of my dear young friend only. "She caught my attention the first mo-"ment I saw her.—'Tis very much like "half of a *six-penny-piece* which I have "long been in possession of; but have it "not about me. Could I see the letter, "my lady, which you just now informed "me contained this piece?"

"It is among some papers of my poor "dear mother! But, as we frequently "peruse it, Sir George, I think I can "readily find it; and I am sure I shall "be happy to satisfy your curiosity on "such a subject to the utmost of my "power."—Her ladyship left the room, while the company indulged in various ideas. The Earl feasted his imagination

on a still greater portion of parliamentary influence than would arise from the mere union of the Marquis with Eliza; for, should she prove a relation of Sir George, he (the Earl) would be authorised to command *his* parliamentary influence, in return for the fostering care and attention of the family to the young lady.—Sir George had been so frequently deceived, when indulging ideas rather sanguine, that he suppressed his hopes as much as possible, to prevent them the mortification of a greater tumble.—Were Eliza to be discovered the daughter of an Emperor, she could not be more elevated in the heart of the Marquis; of course, what hope he indulged was purely on account of the happiness which his most worthy friend might experience.—As for Sir William, happening to be a little absent at the instant, his ideas having done themselves the *honour* of dancing in the

the train of many other admiring attend ants of the *dingy pugilist,* he was a little at a loss what to think; but was very certain, from the marked interest depicted on the countenances of all, that somewhat of moment must have occurred.

Lady Harriett soon returned, and laid the letter open on the table before Sir George, saying—" I will not directly give " you the letter, Sir George, because I " should be sorry to be so far accessary to " a further disappointment. There it is, " Sir; read it and welcome; but at your " own peril be it."—Then seating herself, she fixed her eye upon the agitated baronet.

The hand of Sir George trembled so much, while taking the letter from the table, that he actually dropped it; and appeared in an agony of suspense. The

Marquis hastily picked up the letter, and presented it to his friend, exclaiming— "Good God! I have seen that hand be- "fore!"

"Ha! It is!—It is!—I see it is the "hand of my dearest—my darling—long- "lost wife!—Heavens! Have I, at length, "found my child, to atone for the miseries "I have so long endured!—Let me fly "and embrace my child!"—And the agitated parent wept.

Fortunately for Eliza, Sir George was so much affected, by a variety of sensations, that he was, for some moments, unable to stir. During which interval, it had occurred to Lady Harriett, that, in the situation of her lovely friend, after the wound, though trifling, so very recently received, an abrupt discovery of such infinite importance, might produce effects

of a most serious nature. With some difficulty, therefore, the anxious father was prevailed on to pospone such moment until the morning; when he, and his noble friend, were entreated to honour the party by taking breakfast with them. And, late as it was, the happy company separated unwillingy.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW MANY FIND THEMSELVES MOST EGREGIOUSLY MISTAKEN, WHEN PRESUMING TO ANTICIPATE MUCH STRENGTH OF FORTITUDE ON TRYING OCCASIONS !

THOUGH not a very early riser, Lady Harriett awoke sooner than usual, and was highly pleased to find her lovely friend sleeping soundly, and breathing freely. She, for some time, ruminated on a discovery so truly providential ; and, anxious to open an affair of so important and tender a nature, with all possible care and circumspection ; she, as the best mode

she could devise, had already invented a tale of a circumstance similar to the discovery of the preceding evening, which had happened to a lady in Portman Square; when Eliza awoke, and gladdened her very heart, by declaring that she felt herself perfectly well; except that her breast was rather uneasy if she happened to touch it.

Such a flattering account of the state of Eliza, was an excellent *cue* for the commencement of Lady Harriett's story. She related it, not only with due precaution; but was very impressive in her censure on the conduct of the young lady, in so far yielding up her fortitude to the sudden impulse of Nature, as to endanger her life, by a succession of fainting fits the most alarming to her friends; and most agonizing to her distracted parent.

"Well!" said Eliza—"if it had, hap-
"pily, proved my lot to find my parents,
"I think I could not only have borne it
"with more propriety, or fortitude, which
"your ladyship pleases, but with a degree
"of dignity, which, in my humble opi-
"nion such parents must, in some degree,
"have merited.—Nay, never shake your
"lovely locks at me!—you have acknow-
"ledged that I have played the *heroine*
"very well; why not, then, support the
"feelings of a neglected daughter with
"equal fortitude and eclat? I cannot be
"prevailed on, my dear Lady Harriett,
"to reconcile myself to the neglect which
"I must have experienced.—I most sin-
"cerely hope, not criminally so!"—And
Eliza sighed.—"A discovery, surely,
"might have taken place in all these
"years, though I were prowling the de-
"sarts of Kamschatska, had the heart
"been sedulously occupied in the search.

" Parents might, in so many years, have " found convenient opportunities for ma- " king the necessary inquiries, had a dis- " position of natural tenderness prompted " them to employ the town and country " papers on such a subject: therefore, not " deeming their parental tenderness of the " first class, I think I should feel mine " proportionally weakened; or, at all " events, I should deem it necessary to " attempt an appearance of the kind, " however ill it might correspond with the " feelings of my heart."

An idea so readily taken up, and so warmly defended, gave her ladyship reason to conclude, that it might be requisite to become a *special pleader* in favour of Sir George, before she ventured to communicate the real discovery of the preceding evening. However, she soon found, that Nature was a far more persuasive pleader

than herself; and, while they were preparing themselves for breakfast, her ladyship found it necessary to become the apparent censurer of Sir George's remissness, in order to repress an ebullition of tenderness in her lovely friend, which it had been her sole object to guard against. But, with all her tender manœuvres and circumspection, the fervour of Sir George, exclaiming—"My child! my child!" on the ladies entering the parlour, was attended with such paroxysms of tenderness, surprise, and joy, that it was more than an hour before either parent or child could be made to understand the meaning of the word—*breakfast*: and then, so much were they occupied in gazing on each other, and asking such questions as naturally occurred at the moment, that they often appeared as if only by themselves. Nor do we believe, notwithstanding all her previous expressions of dignity, and

requisite feelings of restraint, Eliza would have been able to have supported such meeting, had not the cautious father seen it necessary to blend prudence with affection, and soon checked the intensity of her raptures, by informing her that he was the only parent whom Providence had permitted to enjoy the tender effusions of so sweet, so amiable, a child.

When nature would suffer the conversation to assume an air of generality, the happy father informed the company, that, compelled to sail at an hour's notice, in order to take a command of some consequence in the interior of India, and warily observed by the scrutinizing eyes of suspicious parents, it was agreed between him and Lady Osborne, that she, unknown to her family, (as the marriage, and birth of her loved child, were totally unknown, or might have proved fatal to

all three,) should go over by the fleet which was soon to follow; and that, in the mean time, she should dispose of the lovely babe with all possible care.—That, by a letter which he received from his lady, only three days before her final departure from town, she noticed the little manœuvres respecting her precious babe, having been dreadfully deranged by the sudden death of the person in whose care she was to have been left; and that she had reason to suspect the fidelity of the widow-lady with whom she then was; and who had informed her, that many inquiries had been made about the child, by persons unknown.—That she was so closely observed by the attendants of her family, as to be in a state little short of distraction; and wholly at a loss how to proceed. Indeed, so extremely critical was her situation, that she had, more than once, conceived, the only chance of insuring the

safety of her darling child, would be to suffer Providence to guide it to some hospitabie mansion; and, by enabling it to make itself a welcome visitor, secure it both tender and respectful treatment for a few months, by which time remittances might be made, and, consequently, intelligence of the precious pledge of their affection received in return.—Such was the communication of the *angel-mother*, as to the disposal of her precious child. In three days after dispatching the letter, she stole from her parents, and went on board an Indiaman, previously engaged to convey her.—The ship was struck by lightning while doubling the Cape of Good Hope; and all on board perished, except one seaman, who was preserved by clinging to a piece of raft; and, being picked up the next day, was sent into the Cape.

Having been delayed some weeks at

Calcutta, Sir George had reached his place of residence only ten day before the melancholy intelligence was announced! Yet, dreadfully affected, as he must naturally have been, at such a loss, he dared not enjoy the melancholy privilege of mourning the untimely end of so beloved a wife; and the want of information as to the situation of their darling infant; the passage of his unfortunate lady having been taken in a fictitious name; and the family of the person whom he was to succeed (and who was then very ill) being spies on his conduct! Soon, however, his sorrows and his cares, by being divided, became somewhat ameliorated; as his noble friend, and predecessor in the command, breathed his last in his arms, constantly intreating him to be the acting executor of his will, and the guardian and protector of his only child, now the Marquis of Montresor. That, returning to Europe about ten years

afterwards, and finding himself at liberty to announce his marriage, and unhappy loss, he had, for more than twelve months, constantly advertised his darling child, in the country papers, as well as those published in town; but without a shadow of intelligence!—That having placed the Marquis at Oxford, he had become a wanderer through the United Kingdom, in hope of discovering his darling child; but all in vain! And, even recently, had, both himself, and his dear young friend, made repeated journeys, in consequence of delusive information sent him, in hope of the reward posted at many of the country post-offices, and so anxiously desired; as it was no less a sum than *five thousand pounds!*

"Your conduct, my dear Eliza, (for "that is really your Christian name),

"charmed me the first time I saw you;
"and being surrounded by such noble and
"truly estimable friends, was, to me, a
"certificate of worthiness of admission
"into any family of distinction. I had
"frankly acceeded to the wishes of my
"dear Marquis, could he convince me
"of having made a suitable impression in
"your esteem; which several little oc-
"currences, during the last month, left
"little doubt of in my mind; and, I
"trust, he will not receive your hand
"from me with less transport, and real
"felicity, because you are the truly amia-
"ble daughter of his old friend and fellow
"traveller."

The Marquis knelt before Eliza, and receiving her unreluctant hand from her parent, he kissed it, and pressed it to his bosom. Then casting a look of peculiar

expression, at both father and daughter, he said—On this day month, Sir, permit "me to remind you I come of age."

"I understand you, my lord.—And if "Sir William can prevail on Lady Har-"riett to follow the example of her so long "and so infinitely obliged friend, by suf-"fering him to take her hand, why, in "God's name, let both be led to the altar "together on that day."

Sir William, who had been amazingly attentive to the interesting scene, instantly knelt before her ladyship.—"Do, "my lady, suffer me to entreat you to "follow so amiable and noble an example. "I may not always prove so sedulously at-"tentive as some husbands, Lady Har-"riett; but I trust that your ladyship "will ever find my little inattentions more "justly meriting the sigh of pity, for an

" absent man, than the frown of displea-
" pleasure at one unworthy of so much
" happiness." Then taking her ladyship's hand, he, with little difficulty, placed it to his lips, while the blushing lady said—
" You, Eliza, have brought me into this
" scrape; and, if I have cause to repent,
" you must be answerable for setting such
" example."

CHAPTER XX.

HOW HARD IT IS TO RECONCILE OURSELVES TO THE DEPARTURE OF FRIENDS WHOM WE HAVE LONG BEEN IN THE HABIT OF BEHOLDING WITH DELIGHT! JUDGE NOT THE EFFORT TOO HARSHLY, WHICH OWES ITS ORIGIN TO FRIENDSHIP OR BENEVOLENCE, FOR CHARITY HIDES A MULTITUDE OF SINS.

As it was earnestly requested by the ladies that they might not be separated until their nuptials had taken place, Lady Harriett Loveplumb's house became the focus of attraction to the friends of all the families: and frequent visits were made to the theatres, so well protected as to bid

defiance to all the Sir Yep Flankem's in Europe—individually.

Among several such visits, our happy party seized an opportunity of beholding Mr. and Miss Holman, in *Jaffier* and *Belvidera*; and were much delighted with the elegant deportment, expression, and ardour, of that excellent veteran actor: and the fervent, tender, and all-engrossing affection, of his lovely daughter.

" 'Tis a pity that a London audience " should not have an opportunity of be- " holding such a performer as my friend " *Holman*, more than two or three times " in as many years!" said Sir George— " *Tempus fugit* is an adage peculiarly ap- " plicable to our situation, with respect to " that gentleman. What can the ma- " nagers of the *Lyceum* be about! Few " actors will wear for a century, like the

"venerable and excellent *Charles Mack-* "*lin*: I, therefore, do sincerely hope, "that the *Jaffier* of to-night will not be "suffered to leave us again in haste; un- "less it be for the summer seasons. Nor, "with the exception of Miss Smith, shall "we, I fear, very easily procure a juve- "nile tragic lady of more interest and "rising talent than the amiable *Miss* "*Holman.* Though I will not hesitate to "say, if the lady would divest herself of "the portion of that truly modern defect "—the *whine*, which she has suffered to "steal on her, she would appear to still "greater advantage. We heard very little "of the *weeping twang* in the charming "*Mrs. Barry*; and we hear still less of "it in the inimitable *Siddons.* The finest "speaking voice now on the stage, would "still have maintained the celebrity of "its possessor, but for its stubborn, sick- "ening, ever crying, *whine.*—Such a pro-

" pensity cannot be too sedulously guarded " against. And here I will not with-hold " my mede of praise from Miss Smith, " for cautiously avoiding an error so dan- " gerous, because absolutely encroaching, " if given the smallest encouragement: " but, indeed, this lady seems not less " anxious to eradicate defects, than to cul- " tivate beauties; and the more she lau- " dably persists in heedfully studying the " varied impassioned tones of *living excel-* " *lence,* the more she will merit public " applause—the more she will deserve " public admiration."

The following week our party took a trip to Richmond, to see *Romeo and Juliet* performed by the respectable company of that very able comedian, *Mr. Beverly*; aided by the eccentric talents of a *Mr. Coates*. The house was ex-

tremely unruly and boisterous; or, rather, a leading party, which, now o' days, generally arrogate that title. When Sir George Osborne, having paid great attention to the scene, and pointed out several beauties to the ladies, *'mid the din of clamour*, observed—"I will venture to "say, that our ***Romeo*** evinces some study "of the language and feelings of our "immortal bard; and some proofs of "powers adequate to a due expression of "them; but a listlessness, peculiar to "gentlemen who attempt Shakspeare's "arduous characters more for pleasure "than for fame or profit, will sometimes "obtrude, so as to induce eccentricities "which would cast a shade over any "beauty. And now," continued he, addressing himself to a gentleman, who, though not actually noisy, seemed to have enjoyed the uproar—"I cannot help cen-"suring those, who, possibly, possessing

"less theatrical abilities—less leisure—
"or less pecuniary means—for indulging
"such *penchant*, still have enough of
"malevolent spleen about them to form
"parties for the annoyance of an audience
"—the obstruction of the business of the
"stage—and the marring traits of talent
"in the performers, merely because their
"more fortunate acquaintance presumes to
"enjoy a pleasure which they are deprived
"of the opportunity, or the ability, of
"partaking. Opposition of any kind, in
"a theatre, unless the defect be so glaring
"as to render general reprehension abso-
"lutely requisite, is certain to be annoy-
"ing to many, who, having paid their
"money at the door, are resolved to be
"pleased, and to have their pennyworth
"of enjoyment for their penny. What,
"then, are we to think of those inveterate
"theatrical walking *nuisances* which fre-
"quent the various theatres for the satanic

" satisfaction of wounding private feelings, " and causing public disturbance, by, at " best—" straining at *knats*, and swallow- " ing *camels !*"

The farce of the evening was *Raising the wind*; in which a *Mr. Finch*, who, as a relaxation from the toils of nocturnal attendance on his numerous customers, frequently indulges his *penchant* for theatricals, performed the part of *Jeremy Diddler* in a very respectable manner. The ladies seemed much pleased with his volatility; and even the cynical knight expressed satisfaction; though he could not help observing to Lady Harriett—" I " have seen that young man perform " several times, my lady; and have fan- " cied that I beheld traits of talent far " above mediocrity. But his close imita- " tion of my old friend Lewis' defective " rapidity of enunciation, in his attempt

" of to-night, has frequently marred ef-
" forts which would, otherwise, have in-
" sured him much more, and much better
" earned, applause. If he be really de-
" sirous of excelling, he certainly cannot
" study the beauties of our best come-
" dians too minutely; but should studi-
" ously shun their defects: as we are all
" too liable to err in our exertions, with-
" out actually copying the errors of others.
" —*Study, but not copy,* is my theatrical
" axiom, ladies," continued Sir George;
" but let me not be misunderstood, I
" pray. I am not so fastidious as to mean
" that, because one eminent performer as
" started, or made sudden exclamations,
" at certain passages of his author, no
" other person is to do the same. We
" do not say that a composer is a plagia-
" rist for setting a song in *C*, because
" *Handel*, *Arne*, *Vento*, *Haydn*, and
" others, have done so before him: but

" had he, like some of our modern musi-
" cal *pigeon-pluckers,* varied but little
" during the greater part of the composi-
" tion, and that merely to avoid detec-
" tion, I should certainly have deemed
" him a plagiarist in the fullest sense of
" the word. So, if our Kemble, or Sid-
" dons, have started, or exclaimed aloud,
" in consonancee to the evident feelings of
" their authors, I do not deem it *copying*
" to do the same; on the contrary, every
" performer, possessing eminent talent,
" must do so.—Nature demands it; as she
" does of every animal, to start and ex-
" claim with terror, which comes abruptly
" on a lion's den, and beholds the king
" of beasts, ready to make his spring, at
" the mouth of it.—Copying closely is not
" less defective than unprofitable; for,
" though we may readily applaud the
" *mimic,* we cannot help deriding the
" *actor.* But, by studying the beauties

"of others, we may frequently transplant "rare flowers into our own gardens, which "may add splendour and fragrance to the "less exquisite around them."

The evening but one previous to the double nuptials, was devoted to taking leave of the theatres for some months, as the party was to spend the spring in Ireland, for the greater convenience of the gentlemen superintending several improvements on their extensive estates there: and, as *Mrs. Siddons* had publicly announced her determination of quitting the stage at the conclusion of the season, the opportunity was caught with avidity, of bidding a long adieu to tragic excellence, in the character of *Belvidera.* To do justice to the inimitable performance of that lady would be a task arduous indeed! Long did her sweet tones—"*Farewell!*

"*Remember twelve!*" tingle in the ears of the ladies with delight; yet caused extreme regret, that, young as they were, it was, most probably, the last time they should ever see their favourite tragedy so exquisitely performed. Eliza, indeed, could not help exclaiming—"What a "cruel thing it is, even if no blame at-"tach to it, that an admiring world is so "soon to be deprived of such a performer "—and with such a scope of powers still "in full vigour, too! Surely she never "played the part better than to-night!"

"Why, here be two gentlemen, Ma-"dam," said a decent looking person, speaking in the broad Lancashire dialect, who was sitting in the pit, close under the box in which the ladies were seated, "that *ha* been bothering me, these last "two acts, about her looking a bit younger "some twenty years ago; but they can't

" exactly agree as to whether she did play
" much better or not. Now I do think as
" how she *ha* given no bad specimen of her
" abilities to-night, whether young or old;
" for I *ha* seen them wipe their eyes
" *pratty* often, in spight o' their teeth;
" for all the one be a *master butcher*, and
" the other a bit of a *soldier-officer*."

Such a reply, so unexpected, caused a titter from the gentleman's auditors in the pit; and a smile from those in the boxes —maugre the solemnity of the scene: for it certainly was not less a severe sarcasm on the two *critics*, than a well-merited compliment to the lady.

After our party had a little recovered themselves, the Marquis of Montresor, turning to Eliza, said—" I well remember
" your censure on *Mrs. Billington,* for
" withdrawing her unrivalled vocal powers

" from the ravished ears of her still listen-
" ing friends, while in their meridian alti-
" tude; and, I must confess, I think this
" lady will justly stand in a similar pre-
" dicament:—especially as the *hiatus* be-
" tween our Queen of Tragedy, and the
" next lady on the scale of excellence is
" still larger."

" And the next announcement of re-
" tiring, to our infinite mortification, I
" suppose, will be from *Mr. Kemble!*"
said Sir George.—" But let that gentle-
" man, and his sister, too, beware; lest,
" deprived of two such matchless *pillars*,
" the splendid *Temple of Melpomene*
" should dwindle to a mere *Mansion of*
" *Mediocrity*. I do not—cannot wish
" them to continue frequent performers of
" Shakspeare's and Otway's arduous and
" soul-exhausting characters; but, still
" retaining such exalted powers, we cer-

"tainly might hope to be, now and then, "indulged with the efforts of both, as an "*histrionic banquet*, for some years "longer—were such indulgencies the pure "sacrficies of gratitude on the altar of a "long liberal, and still enraptured, pub-"lic."

"Bless me, Sir George!" exclaimed Lady Harriett—"you speak as earnestly "as if you were absolutely interested."

"Not much, my dear Lady Harriett," replied the Knight, with a smile—"for "the idea of a *glowing heat* cannot be very "sanguine, while paying adoration to the "*setting sun!* But he must be void of "sentiment, indeed, who could not extol "the beauties of a summer evening, until "he had first ascertained whether his own "plants and flowers had received due re-"freshment from the genial warmth of the "day."

CHAPTER XXI.

"Though plung'd in ills, and exercis'd in care,
"Yet never let the noble mind despair;
"For blessings ever wait on virtuous deeds,
"And though a late, a sure reward succeeds."

ON the morning which was to make the Marquis and Sir William the happiest of mortals, the whole party assembled in Grosvenor Square by eight o'clock, to partake of an early breakfast, as they had more than thirty miles to travel before dinner, to a seat of Sir George Osborne's beyond Guildford, which was duly prepared for their reception. But they had

not been seated many minutes when the *parson* was announced.

"Bless me, my dear Eliza," exclaimed Lady Harriet—"if we are to be hurried "away from our breakfast—on such a "morning, we are likely to have a pretty "bustling life of it!"

"Don't be alarmed, ladies," replied the Marquis—"the clergyman is a very wor-"thy man; and being anxious to ascertain, "in *propria personæ*, that Sir William, "and your humble servant, are not going "to throw their precious persons away on "two fashionable *shrews*, he is come to "take a social breakfast with us, in order "to observe your motions a little. But I "will have the honour to introduce him." —And retiring, he returned instantly, leading the clergyman, who appeared to be about five-and-thirty, of middle stature,

with a countenance beeming all the benignity of a patriarch—the fortitude of a saint—and benevolence of a Christian.

After having been formally introduced, the reverend gentleman addressed himself to Lady Harriett and Eliza; and, in strains equally fervid as respecful, made them a profusion of grateful acknowledgements, as well for his wife and children, as for himself, for their most inestimable goodness, bestowed at a time when all the aid of spiritual contemplation was absolutely requisite to baffle the rash approaches of despair.

Full as much at a loss to comprehend the clergyman, as they were on the first visit of the Marchioness de Piomberti, the ladies looked equally confused; but, having friends so near them, to apply to for a solution of the enigma, they were not long

before they requested to be relieved from their embarrassment: when it appeared, that the Marquis, on hearing of the adventures of the inn, on the borders of Huntingdon, had sent for Sally's benevolent curate; and, having presented him with a living, in the county of Surrey, worth three hundred pounds per annum, had requested his attendance to perform the wedding ceremony.—So amply was the truly moral encouragement, prefixed to this chapter, verified in the person of the amiable curate!—To the supreme satisfaction, and most agreeable surprise of the ladies, and the whole party.

While the awful ceremony was performing, which was to unite two of the loveliest of their sex, to two of the most amiable of our's, the rattling of the carriages to the door, for the conveyance of all the parties to Sir George's seat, roused

the attention of Sir Yep Flankem; who, being informed of the cause of the bustle, went to the window to take a distant survey.—"A mighty pretty thing!" cried the baronet—"kick me, and shoot me
"afterwards; a mighty pretty thing, in-
"deed!—Lose a hand—my whip hand,
"too, for such a little restive *vixen* as
"that!—Dare n't think of any thing fur-
"ther, neither; because the testy Mar-
"quis carries so many guns, and is so
"d—d fond of standing close to the mark!
"—Lord, lord! What will my poor *ba-*
"*rouche* do for a rattle through Bond
"Street?—What will my horses do for a
"long-trot in style?—And what will the
"*flats* do for a stare of some consequence
"now!—'Tis all up with the club now!
"—All their future *prancing paradings*
"wont be worth a handful of horse-beans!
"—Yes, yes; Sir Yep's occupation's
"gone, sure enough; and his sisters may

"put him at the *wheel* with an oyster-"
"wench, if they can get no one else to
"*draw* with him!—Humph! The fools
"begin to halloo; so, they are coming out
"I suppose. I should n't like to be cursed,
"at such a time, myself; so I'll get away
"from the window, and not see them."

A loud huzza, from the numerous bye-standers, and the rattling of the carriages, announced the departure of the much-esteemed company. The morning was as splendid as the prospect of happiness to our lovely and amiable pairs was auspicious.—May all their days be days of sun-shine! And may their children inherit their felicity with their virtues!

FINIS.

Hildyard, Printer, Fetter Lane, Holborn.